

The Trials of George Thomas – Prolog

“George, this is Helen. Somebody just shot the President. It’s on all the news.”

“Kill him or wound him like they did Reagan?”

“They didn’t say. Al Haig died a while back so I wonder who is in charge.”

“That’s not funny Helen; at least under these circumstances. This could get bad, depending on who is involved. Have they caught anyone?”

“Speculation is that it was a sniper. More like a JFK deal than a Reagan deal.”

“Biden in charge?”

“He’s flying back to Washington from Omaha. There’s almost a total news blackout on this thing. You don’t suppose Obama is dead and they’re holding off on an announcement to give Law Enforcement time to prepare for the riots that are sure to follow, do you?”

“I don’t know what to think, dear. I’ll get off early and come right home. It might be a good idea to be off the streets if you’re right.”

“I’m already home. I’ll be waiting. Be careful.”

The Trials of George Thomas – One

How we got here...

George was 24 when he participated in the 1983 Operation Urgent Fury, 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment. George was a civilian when Operation Just Cause happened three years later.

Recently, circa late 1993, one of the guys at work had purchased a civilian version of the M14 built by Springfield Armory, Inc.

“I’m going to the range on Saturday to see how my new rifle shoots. Want to come along George?”

“Let me check with Helen. If she doesn’t have anything planned, I’d love to come. You bought one of those civilian M14s, didn’t you?”

“Yep. It’s a Springfield Armory, Inc. National Match. I picked up some surplus ammo and extra USGI magazines. Say, have you heard about that new Assault Weapons Ban Congress is talking about?”

Un-un. What’s that about?”

“Just what it says, a ban on assault weapons. The thing is... their definition of assault weapons seems to be way overboard. An AK or an AR is an assault weapon while there’s no way an M14 is. Nonetheless, they’re going to classify a main battle rifle as an assault weapon. And, get this; magazines over 10 rounds will be banned.”

“Has it passed yet?”

“No. I think it’s only a matter of time. Considering all the shootings, Ruby Ridge, Waco and 101 California Street, Congress has a bug up its tail. And, if it passes, Clinton will sign it in the blink of an eye. You were a Ranger, right? Ever shoot an M14?”

“I carried an M16A2. Only other weapon I got to shoot was a Steyr AUG. It’s a strange looking bullpup design that uses a gas piston and fires from a closed bolt. I’ve seen M14s but never fired one. Do I need ammo?”

“Get a battle pack of 7.62x51mm NATO surplus. German, English or American if you can find it. Don’t get anything with a steel case. The American ammo will be boxer primed and reloadable. The foreign stuff will probably be Berdan primed and not reloadable; that should make it cheaper.”

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Long story short, I got to go shooting and we had a good time. Bill had an update on the AWB and I had to make a decision. I could buy a rifle now with high capacity magazines and a bunch of surplus; or, I could wait ten years and hope the law's proposed sunset clause kicked in.

"Do you have a minute or two?"

"Like Bill's rifle, don't you?"

"Yes, I do. I can either get a Standard model or a National Match model. What do you think?"

"How are we on money?"

"We can afford a National Match, spare 20 round magazines and four or five cases of surplus. It will be a while before we make a decision on a supplemental retirement plan. I doubt the prices will go down."

"Why would you shoot surplus ammo in a Match rifle?"

"Because it's cheap? If this Assault Weapons Ban passes, many of the weapons currently available will be banned."

"Ok, what about me?"

"What about you?"

"If you buy guns for yourself, do you intend to buy guns for me?"

"What would you like?"

"A Ruger Mini-14, a Browning Hi-Power and a 12 gauge pump with a 20" barrel, rifle sights and a magazine extension. Are you also considering a handgun or shotgun?"

"I suppose I could get a 12 gauge with rifle sights and magazine extension. I'm not sure on a handgun. Don't you think that a 12 gauge might be too much gun for you?"

"Not if I used reduced recoil shells. They don't make 00 for a 20 gauge according to the guy in the gun store. Para Ordnance has that new P-14 if you can get it bought before the Ban goes into effect. If you get the guns and magazines, the ammo can come after. Besides, are you sure you don't want some match ammo for the match rifle?"

"You seem to be awfully well informed."

"You have a birthday coming and there's Christmas. I've been shopping. You should really pay more attention to the news honey; it's getting scary out there."

“If we’re going to start acquiring firearms, we’ll need to consider a gun safe.”

“I agree.”

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When I heard someone discussing the Corbon Flying Ashcan, I checked it out. The JHP slug was an 185gr Gold Dot slug manufactured by Speer. The Corbon cartridge was marginally hotter than the Speer loading. We discussed it and decided to buy 230gr Speer Gold Dot for carry and 230gr FMJ for practice. In the 9mm ammo, Helen wanted the 124gr+P Gold Dot and 124gr FMJ for practice.

His best offer was 10% off, across the board, IF we bought all six firearms and the spare magazines through him. The only 30 round Ruger magazines he had were the ones intended to be used with the AC-556. We bought 20 of those and 20 of the 20 round USGI M14 magazines. Handgun magazines would include 4 spare magazines for each pistol.

He didn’t carry surplus but had a printed list of outlets to contact. If we bought match grade 5.56 or 7.62 he’d give us the same discount on purchases of two or more cases. Two weeks later, we hauled home six new firearms and many spare magazines. I ordered a 500 round case of Lake City M855 for Helen’s rifle and a 500 round case of 175gr M118LR for my rifle. The M118LR was a relatively new loading replacing the 173gr M118. Eventually we were able to load up on Australian surplus 7.62 and additional Lake City M855.

We went with 2 cases of Brenneke slugs, 2 cases of #4 Buck and 4 cases of 00 buck. Bill’s wife Susan soon joined us at the range. Susan was no novice. This being a state that permitted NFA firearms, the fourth trip to the range saw Bill with a suppressor on his rifle and a new scope. Susan’s rifle, a Bushmaster, had a suppressor too. The surprise came when she pulled out a Ruger Mark II with integral suppressor.

In ’94, the dreaded AWB passed and Clinton signed it the same day. The price of pre-ban magazines jumped overnight. During the period leading up to the Ban, manufactures were cranking out magazines 24/7 so, although expensive, there were magazines available. We purchased threaded barrels for both pistols and purchased the suppressors for both rifles and pistols. It took ten months to get approval from the ATF. It also took a gunsmith a month to tweak the firearms so they’d function smoothly with suppressors. We followed Bill’s advice and didn’t purchase subsonic ammo for any of our 4 suppressed firearms.

One Saturday after we left the range, Bill and Susan suggested we come over for drinks. Once we had our drinks in hand, Bill asked, “How are you fixed for Long Term Food Supplies?”

“Helen, you can probably answer that better than I can.”

“Well, it depends on what type of supplies you’re discussing. We watch the ads and generally buy up to the limit. If it’s a good enough deal, we go back every day until the sale ends. We only buy what we eat. Time wise, we have maybe 3 months in reserve.”

“I see. Susan, why don’t you show Helen our pantry and I’ll take George downstairs? Bring your drink.”

Half their basement was furnished. It had a $\frac{3}{4}$ bath, fireplace and a convertible sofa. The other side must have been Bill’s side, it was unfinished. Not empty mind you, just unfinished. Half of it was filled with metal shelving set up in rows spaced about 30” apart and strapped together so they wouldn’t shift. One section held jar after jar of home canned food ranging from jams and jellies to vegetables to fruit to home canned meat. Another section held box after box of number 10 cans containing freeze dried, dehydrated and preserved food. Another section was devoted to medical supplies and ammunition and the final section’s shelves were further apart and held 6 gallon pails that Bill called ‘Super Pails’.

“How much food do you have?”

“Ten years for two people. Those pails mostly contain grains, beans and rice. Our freezer over there is full and we rotate the food and restock it quarterly.”

“Where’s the bomb shelter?”

“Over here behind this cabinet. Let me release the lock and swing the cabinet away from the wall.”

“A safe door?”

“Close. It’s a blast door filled with concrete. Give me a hand, it’s heavy.”

“Wait a minute, the ramp goes downward?”

“Of course.”

It appeared that we were paralleling an extended basement wall on one side and a separate wall about 4’ from the extended wall. It led to what Bill revealed was a shelter under their garage slab.

“There are 8” of concrete in the overhead and six feet of earth over that and the 4” garage slab. The ceiling is 9’ to give a feeling of spaciousness. The protection factor is really high; depending on who you believe, anywhere from 75,000 to over a million.”

“Where did you get the food?”

“Two sources, Walton Feed in Idaho and Emergency Essentials in Utah. It takes more than just the food; you need equipment like a grain grinder, a pressure canner, canning jars and lids and all manner of things. Susan and I shop both Sam’s Club and Costco in addition to Wal-Mart. Since we happen to drink Folgers coffee, and coffee isn’t included in the Long Term Storage Foods, we get that at Costco along with the shortening and cooking oil. Sam’s provides pasta and we buy bread flour from Wal-Mart. We freeze the flour for about a week and then pack it in Mylar bags with oxygen absorbers inside of six gallon pails, seal the bags and then the pail.”

“Why freeze it?”

“That kills any bugs or eggs in the flour so you don’t have to sift the crap out when you go to use it. We also have dough enhancers and extra gluten, just in case.”

“Will it keep a long time?”

“I don’t know. We keep a two year supply and rotate it out about 50 pounds at a time. I’d have to say, so far, so good.”

“How much do you consider being a year’s supply?”

“Three hundred and fifty pounds. That’s about one pound per day.”

“But you said you have a ten year supply.”

“We do. Most of the flour is stored in its natural form, wheat. Wheat will keep almost forever stored the way it’s packaged. Our storage method copies the storage method used by those two food suppliers I mentioned.”

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Meanwhile...

The Assault Weapons Ban had sunset. During the interim, we accumulated various forms of wealth including a ‘bomb shelter’ LTS foods, radiation instruments and additional guns and ammo. I acquired a Springfield Armory Super Match and added a variable power Mk 4 Leopold scope. I also acquired a MacMillan Tac-50 with all the bells and whistles and 750gr Hornady A-MAX match ammo. I selected a Nightforce NXS 12-42x56mm scope and a Jet suppressor. Ruger had that new SR-556 out and Helen really wanted one. She was under the impression that it was available as a select fire weapon. I checked it out.

“The only select fire Ruger rifle that the dealer knew of was the AC-556. He can get a new one so the only thing we have to do is apply for the tax stamp.”

“Folding stock?”

“Yes. You can have either the Ruger folding stock or a Butler Creek folding stock. He also said he could install a Surefire suppressor and tune the rifle to work with the suppressor. He doesn’t carry the ACOG but said we could get it almost anywhere.”

“Maybe we should sell some of that gold and silver we bought after 9/11.”

“No way. It goes up in value every day and is going up faster than inflation. We’ll go in tomorrow and do the paperwork for the ATF and get it submitted.”

Since we already had NFA registered weapons, the tax stamps didn’t take that long. I got one stamp for the suppressor for my Super Match and Helen got two, the AC-556 and the suppressor. Everything was in place on November 2, 2010. We acquired additional M118LR for my rifles and more M855 for her rifles, bringing us to ~10,000 rounds of rifle ammo in each caliber.

The Trials of George Thomas – Two

The present...

George Thomas was now 51 years old and 15 years from retirement. Earlier that day, Helen had called him to tell him that President Obama had been shot or shot at. The Vice President had returned from Omaha and was, for the moment, Acting President. The President was in the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland. The Naval Hospital was in the first steps of being merged with Walter Reed Army Medical Center. Between the two hospitals, there was no shortage of well qualified physicians. There were lingering questions about their ability to perform autopsies, so it was in everyone's best interest to keep the President alive.

"I'm home."

"Did you have any problems?"

"Actually no. I stayed on the freeway instead of using surface streets like I usually do. Is there any additional news?"

"Speculation. Fox News claimed they had information from an unnamed source that President Obama was killed. They backed up their claim by showing footage from their affiliates. There seems to be activity at several military bases, posts and stations."

"Has the Governor called out the Guard?"

"Not that I've heard of. However, the Sheriff recalled all off duty Deputies. I think they said that the Phoenix PD was doing the same. Do you think we should close the shutters?"

"It might be a good idea. I'll crank them down starting with the front. Keep an ear open about the Guard."

We had security shutters of a sort. They were aluminum and weren't bulletproof but could stop a Molotov cocktail should one be lobbed at a window. The bulletproof shutters were expensive, especially if you got something to stop a 7.62 round. We read most of the fiction at Frugal's over the years and had implemented a fair share of the story suggestions. Oft times we couldn't quite come up with the cash to install the level of protection we wanted although we surely tried.

The home had been built by a company that erected a masonry exterior and inserted a frame interior. We had opted for solid concrete block for the exterior. We went one step further at the time and installed 2x6 framing as opposed to the standard 2x4 framing. This allowed an additional 2" of foam insulation to be sprayed on the inside of the block. All of the drywall was 3/4". We used copper sheeting on the roof and the attic had insulation totaling an R value of 50. The various changes and additions had upped the price

by over 20%. We figured a ten year payback on our reduced electrical bills. The only items exclusively powered by commercial power initially were the air conditioning, hot water heater and the washing machine. Only the kitchen stove, furnace and dryer were fueled with natural gas, but I had the conversion kits.

Our shelter was homemade and based on the 10'x50' culvert that Utah Shelter Systems sold. Our home faced north hence the roof on the back side was exposed to the sun. The roof was covered with PV panels which were routed to the batteries under the shelter floor. The patio cover was flat but half covered by solar heaters that kept the electrical usage in the hot water heater to minimums. Mesa was a city where everything was hot most of the year. That wasn't the case at the moment, it was January, 2011 and the temperatures were moderate to cool.

The shelter had the VA-150 ANDAIR/LUWA System with spare filters and 3 bar blast valves. The entrance and exit was a pair of the Utah Shelter Systems Horizontal Blast Doors, one at each end. We had initially intended to use propane burners in the shelter but ended up following their recommendations to use electrical burners. The blast doors weren't a straight shot down the nearly 20' to the shelter floor. Instead, we used larger oval culverts at an angle with stairs, which included the 90° turn required about halfway down. They ended in small six foot square concrete block rooms.

One consideration that most had to deal with was children. Unfortunately after a few years of trying, we went to a specialist and learned that we wouldn't be raising children unless we adopted. Helen was pretty torn up for the better part of a year. It didn't help that our parents had purchased firearms for the children we expected to have. The purchases were two Winchester 9422s and two Single Six revolvers. When Winchester announced they were shutting down we bought 2 rifles and 2 carbines, all in .45 Colt. We also bought four Marlin rifles, 2 1894 Cowboys in .45 Colt and two 1895 Cowboys in .45-70 Government.

We made one other purchase when Ruger first brought out the Vaquero, two each in 4¾", 5½" and 7½". We even took a recommendation or two from Tired Old Man and bought Paladin holsters for the 7½" and the Laredo Crossdraw for the 4¾" and 5½" revolvers.

While we'd be scraping the bottom of the barrel if we turned to those, they could use black powder. We laid in a supply of Pyrodex and primers plus Lee loaders. And, because my 7.62 ammo was boxer primed, primers, smokeless powder and 168gr Hornady BTHP bullets. The M855 was also boxer primed and we purchased 62gr SS109 bullets, more smokeless power and primers. Again, we went with the Lee Loaders. There were 10 25-gallon bottles of propane in the shed and jets for the stove and gas grill, not counting our large propane tank.

"George, Bill. Have you gone into lockdown mode?"

“The shutters are down and the gates locked. That’s about all we can do at the moment.”

“Look, the reason I called was that I have to make a shopping run and wondered if you might be available to cover my back.”

“No problem as long as we get home before the curfew that will probably go in effect at sundown.”

“I’ll pick you up in 30 minutes.”

“Helen, I’m going with Bill for some last minute shopping. Is there anything we need?”

“The list is on the refrigerator door. If you see something I left off, add it to the list.”

“I don’t see any liquor. We’re low on both Tequila and Jack Daniels.”

“Then, add them to the list. Do you have enough cash?”

“Well....”

“Take the cash out of my billfold. Be sure you get Squirt and margarita mix.”

“Anything else?”

“If you see something in the meat case that looks good, get it too.”

I left home with about \$600 in my wallet. I got a 50-50 case of Jack and Jose Cuervo. Her list included 20 ounce bottles of water and gallon jugs of water. I added a case of Squirt, Coke Classic and a dozen bottles of margarita mix. With about ~300 left in my wallet, I made a stop at the meat counter selecting ground beef, a dozen chickens and 3 packages of sirloin. I also grabbed a bag of limes from the produce section.

We stopped back at our place and quickly unloaded into the garage. Bill took off for home, about a mile distant. I carried the purchases into the house and put the various items away. I added a bottle each of both liquors to the small bar and took the rest to the basement to add to our storage shelves.

When I returned to the living room, Helen was engrossed in the news coverage from channel 10 KSAZ (Fox). For all intents and purposes, the majority of the protest action was being promoted by Latinos/Hispanics and Blacks. Thus far it had been confined to downtown business districts. I went ahead and turned on the small TV in our study that received the feed from the CCTV mounted on our antenna mast and flipped the switch that activated the constant roaming feature. Satisfied the camera and controls were operating properly, I joined Helen in the living room.

“The water is in the basement, the liquor put away and the other things are on the kitchen counter. I put the meat in the refrigerator.”

“What did you get?”

“Ground beef, chickens and sirloins.”

“I’ll repack it in a bit George. Biden is supposed to address the nation at 7 pm local. Maybe we’ll finally find out what is going on. Let’s go ahead and do the meat and get supper out of the way. Give me a hand?”

“Sure. What do you want me to do first?”

“Find the Seal-a-meal and a new roll of bagging. I’ll weigh out the ground beef into one pound units. What should I leave out for supper?”

“Do you have some nice potatoes and a package of lettuce?”

“Sure do. Steaks for dinner?”

“Yes, please.”

“Bring a can of mushrooms.”

It took about an hour to pack and store the meat. The potatoes were about done and she started the mushrooms and grilled the steaks. By six, we were eating and by six forty-five, the dishwasher was running. We got coffee and sat down in front of the TV again. This time we switched to Fox News Channel to hear the live address and commentary before and after.

Brit Hume was leading a panel consisting of Juan Williams, Charles Krauthammer and Fred Barnes. While all four agreed that the situation was extremely serious, there was no consensus on the fate of President Obama. The pre speech discussion covered several possibilities including his death, a crippling or long term injury or a moderate injury that would see him returned to office in short order.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Vice President and Acting President

At three-twenty Washington time, an assassination attempt was made on the life of President Barack Obama by a sniper as he was about to board Marine One to return to the White House. Instead, Marine One transferred the President to the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, Maryland.

The President underwent surgery to treat his injury and is, at this moment, in a coma. The doctors indicate that the surgery was successful and it’s simply a matter of time un-

til the President regains consciousness. I ask the entire nation to join us in prayers for a quick and speedy recovery.

The panel began discussing the ramifications of the announcement, focusing on a crippling or long term injury or a moderate injury that would see him returned to office in short order. After the panel concluded its discussions, Fox turned to breaking news and ran video segments from various affiliates showing truckload after truckload of military personnel being transported from Marine Corps camps and Army posts.

We switched back to channel 10 KSAZ just in time to hear the latter half of an announcement by Governor Brewer activating some of the Arizona National Guard. Small contingents would be sent to Flagstaff and Tucson with the majority moved to the greater Phoenix area. After the speech, the station switched to live coverage highlighting growing unrest in the area, mostly in Phoenix.

“Hello?”

“George, Bill. Did you catch Biden’s speech?”

“We both watched it. It appears that Biden will be in charge for a while. Brewer called up the Guard too. The trouble is just beginning.”

“We think so too. We’re not sure if we’ll go in tomorrow. The two of you should give that some thought too. At least you and I can have protection out in the parking lot. Our wives on the other hand don’t have the luxury since neither employer will allow firearms on their property.”

“Maybe we should take them to work and pick them up. It’s out of the way... but, it would eliminate the problem.”

“Actually, I was thinking about carpooling for the rest of the week. You pick us up tomorrow and we pick you up the following day. Oh, oh.”

“What?”

“All hell is breaking loose in Chicago, Detroit and Miami. Biden didn’t declare a state of emergency did he?”

“It wasn’t in his speech, why?”

“The military on TV are active duty, not National Guard. Wait, Fox is now saying that he did declare a state of emergency and has activated military units to assist police in putting down unrest. Something about the Insurrection Act of 1807.”

“That’s what Bush used as authority to bring in the Army and Marines during the ’92 LA Riots. Since then, the law was changed several times. The changes have mostly been

repealed and as of the moment, the laws are near what they were in 1992; Posse Comitatus with the exclusion of troops used under the order of the President pursuant to the Insurrection Act. We also have the 1st Brigade Combat Team under Northcom for situations just such as these.”

“How big of force is that?”

“Twenty thousand.”

“Won’t be enough considering the number of cities likely to be involved. I can understand the blacks being involved in protests, but why the Hispanics?”

“Hispanics swung the election for Harry Reid in Nevada. Do you think that’s it?”

“That could be. We haven’t heard much about the Aztlán Movement and La Raza Unida Party recently. You don’t suppose...”

“Nah... well, maybe so. There have been a lot of people coming over the border. That’s what got the law passed. Is that still in court?”

“It is as far as I know. I wouldn’t be surprised if it didn’t end up in the Supreme Court. As much as I hate to say it, we’d have been better off if he had light wounds allowing him to return to work soon or had been killed. As long as he’s in a coma in the hospital and Biden is only Acting President, everyone with an axe to grind will be riled up.”

“That raises a question. The 25th Amendment clarified Presidential succession. I’m not that familiar with it; doesn’t the President have to notify Congress in writing that he can’t fulfill his duties?”

“Under the third clause it does. However, in a case such as the one we’re in, the fourth clause allows the Vice President and Cabinet to transmit a written declaration that the President is unable to discharge his duties. The Vice President then becomes Acting President until the President transmits a written declaration that his disability no longer exists. Or, he dies, in which case the Vice President becomes the President. Look up Acting President of the United States on Wiki. It lays out the history and the current status of the law. This is the first time it has really come up.”

“No Al Haig, huh?”

“He didn’t say he was Acting President. All he said was ‘I am in control here’. His statement reflected political reality, not legal reality. Beside, Bush was on his way back to the White House and Reagan wasn’t dead. Has there been any word on what the sniper used? If they say it was Carcano there’s something rotten in Denmark.”

“Actually I heard .338 Lapua Magnum. I don’t know if that is true. It does have the range; well over 2 clicks.”

“I’m surprised that the Secret Service let anyone get close enough for a shot.”

“Twenty-five hundred meters is over a mile and a half. He was at Andrews transferring from Air Force One to Marine One. He should have been safe. What are the odds of a sniper knowing his itinerary and being in the exact place necessary to make a shot like that and take someone out with the first shot?”

“Was that the distance? Twenty-five hundred meters?”

“I don’t know. I was just saying it had to be a very long range shot and the sniper only got one chance. Besides, he was moving, not standing still. Whoever it was, he was very good.”

“Let me talk to Helen about carpooling and I’ll get back to you in a bit.”

“Who was that?”

“Bill. He suggested carpooling for the rest of the week. We’d take turns alternating days and take you and Susan to your jobs before we go to ours.”

“I kind of like that. Four gun hands in a single vehicle.”

“I’ve created a blood thirsty monster!”

“You know what I’m saying. If it gets too bad, the company may shut down for a few days. I think Susan’s might too. Will yours?”

“Doubtful. They’ll probably just load ammo into a couple of Apaches.”

“What model are you building these days?”

“AH-64D, block III. We just got the contract this past October. Look, I’ve got to call Bill back and tell him ok. After that, I think maybe I’ll turn in.”

“I’m going to watch a few minutes longer.”

“Bill, George. It’s a go. We’ll pick you up at 6:30.”

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The discord increased though the night despite no change in the President’s reported condition. We got up an hour earlier than usual and watched the news over breakfast. There were problems cropping up in several more large cities. None of the correspondents was quite sure why people were reacting as they were. One would have thought that churches would be holding prayer vigils/services. Some did, but nothing on the

scale of what happened after 9/11. Back in April and May of 1968, 125 cities erupted into rioting in the wake of Martin Luther King's assassination. They included Baltimore, Washington, New York, Chicago and Louisville, Kentucky.

Race riots are nothing new to the American scene. Riots defined by "race" have taken place between ethnic groups in the United States since as early as the pre-Revolution era of the 18th century. During the early-to-mid- 19th centuries, violent rioting occurred between Protestant "Nativists" and recently arrived Irish Catholic immigrants. These reached heights during the peak of immigration in the 1840s and 1850s in cities including New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. During the early 20th century, riots were common against Irish and French-Canadian immigrants in Providence, Rhode Island.

The San Francisco Vigilance Movements of 1851 and 1856 are often described by sympathetic historians as responses to rampant crime and government corruption. In addition to lynching accused criminals, the vigilantes also systematically attacked Irish immigrants, however. The anti-immigrant violence later focused on Mexicans and Chinese immigrants.

During the late 19th century and early 20th century, Italian Americans were the second minority group (next to African Americans) most likely to be lynched. One of the largest lynchings in US history occurred in New Orleans in 1891, when eleven Italians were violently murdered in the streets by a large lynch mob. In the 1890s a total of twenty Italians were lynched in the South. Riots and lynchings against Italian Americans erupted into the 20th century in the South, as well as in New York City, Chicago, and Boston.

On top of that there was a possible additional element, or two. The first was the Latino involvement, especially here in the greater Phoenix area and the second, which just occurred to me, was the possibility of terrorists aka militant Islamics using the goings on as a cover for who knows what. For my part, I didn't assume that we were dealing with a militant Islamic. Several possibilities did occur to me as I drifted off to sleep, a racially motivated act being first and foremost. A less likely possibility was a patriot fed up with our country being sold out by a socialist. Latino refers to people from the Americas while Hispanic refers to Spanish speakers and they are often the same people.

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"If you have the lunches I think we're ready to leave."

"I need to grab my Browning. Ah, the heck with it, I'll just grab the pistol belt with everything attached and put it in the trunk. Be sure to lower the garage door shutter."

"You know, I sure wish I had a hideout piece in an ankle holster with a couple of spare magazines in a mag carrier on the other ankle."

"Fifteen shots plus 56 reloads isn't enough?"

"It's not that. We have to leave our weapons in the vehicle. I'd like to have something available all of the time. I looked at my 2010 Para catalog last night before I went to bed. I'm leaning towards a Nite Hawg. Since you like the 9mm, you could go with a Carry 9 with eight plus one. We could stop on the way home from work or after we drop Bill and Susan off. You could get one of those Galco purses they carry in the gun shop and nobody would be any the wiser."

"Let me think about it, ok?"

"No problem. Would it be ok if I went ahead and got a Nite Hawg?"

"I suppose so. You'd better get four spare magazines rather than two."

There's only about a nickels difference between a M1911 and a Browning Hi-Power. If you know how to disassemble, clean and reassemble one, you can do the other. They all take about the same horsepower to rack the slide so, again, one is about equal to the other. The difference lies solely in the cartridge, .45acp versus 9mm Parabellum. The .45acp has more innate knockdown power because of the size of the bullet. However, 124gr +P 9mm ammo has a following. We weren't short on either round.

"You guys ready?"

"Yes. How about the ladies sit in back and we sit in front? We can have separate conversions that way and do the least seat swapping."

"I'll move in back, George."

"Ok honey."

"So, what's new with you?"

"Nothing much, really. I was discussing buying a Para Ordnance Nite Hawg with Helen. They're small, compact and carry a fair load of .45acp. We both have the old CCWs so it's not really a problem carrying one in an ankle holster. Get a dual mag carrier for the off side."

"I have a Warthawg. It's about the same gun. Twenty-four ounces, right?"

"Right. What finish, stainless or Regal?"

"Stainless."

"The Nite Hawg comes in Covert Black with the tritium sights. Although I think I'm about ready to look into those Crimson Trace laser grips."

"I'm not sure they're available for the smaller handguns. Model 1911s with ambidextrous safeties have to be modified."

"You carry it full time?"

"It's my American Express card."

"Susan too?"

"Oh yeah. She prefers 9mm but in a M1911 package. Hi-Power plus a Carry 9."

"George was talking about buying a compact pistol that he can carry in an ankle holster. He even suggested we get one for me that I could carry in a Galco purse."

"Like this purse?"

"That's a Galco?"

"Yes, and this is my 9mm Carry 9."

"But it's against the rules to carry a firearm where you work."

"I know. I also know that what they don't know won't hurt me. Let's face it Helen, if it gets to the point where I have to use this at work, I'm down to a choice between my life and my job. I can find another job."

"Maybe we will go shopping after work."

"We can go along. I need to replace my practice ammo and Bill was talking about two more magazines for his Warthawg."

"What brand of ammo do you use in your handguns?"

"Speer. We use Gold Dot for carry and Lawman for practice. Same bullet weights for both. Bill uses all 230gr and I use all 124gr."

"That's what we use."

"Good choices in my opinion. My Gold Dot is +P and the Lawman isn't so I practice at times with some Gold Dot. There's a bit of difference in recoil, especially with the Carry 9. No surprises doing it my way. The Hi-Power weighs 35 ounces versus the 24 ounces for the Carry 9, not counting ammo. Definitely a little more recoil. The Carry 9 is DAO."

“One thing you’ll have to keep in mind George is that your P-14 weighs 40 ounces empty and the Nite Hawg weighs 24 ounces empty. More recoil due to the lower weight. On the other hand, I doubt you’d want a P-14 in an ankle holster.”

“I’d definitely limp if I did that. Susan, we’re here.”

“Thanks. See you tonight.”

“George, I talked to Susan. We’ll go shopping tonight like you wanted.”

“If we can find a store open. They could be locked down, you know. Ok honey, we’re here. Stay safe.”

“So that’s what they were talking about. Susan carries a Galco purse with a Carry 9. If Helen was already thinking about it, she probably convinced her. She even carries it to work although the State of Arizona prohibits weapons on the property. They’d probably just warn her if they found out. If she had to use it, she’d no doubt lose her job.”

“Boeing wouldn’t be too happy to know you were carrying.”

“It’s that old survivalist’s thing. Would you rather have it and not need it or need it and not have it? I have enough years in that finding a new job wouldn’t be impossible and I’d most likely be alive to look for a new job.”

“Gibbs was supposed to make a statement this morning about the President’s condition. As much as I don’t care for the man politically, it’s just not right that someone shot him. I seriously doubt he would be reelected in 2012. If he survives and is able to return to work, this should pick up a few millions votes for him.”

“You don’t think the GOP will take the Senate and White House in 2012?”

“Oh, before this, I’d have put money on it if they had a decent candidate. There has been a lot of displeasure over the economy and that healthcare deal. The Tea Party pretty much put the GOP back in control of the House and cut the Democrat’s majority in the Senate down to a bare minimum. That means two years of a mostly do nothing Congress. The GOP doesn’t have the votes to overturn a veto of a repeal of healthcare.”

“Have you seen any of the Bush interviews? I have to tell you, after seeing what he’s had to say, I’m a little more comfortable with voting for him both times.”

“Being President is a hard job in the best of times. What did you think about that comment last November about being out of Afghanistan by 2014?”

“Not much. That would make Afghanistan even longer than Vietnam. The thing that I don’t understand is how our government thought they could do what the Soviet Union couldn’t with fewer troops.”

“Pure ego.”

“Sorry fellas, Boeing ordered the line shutdown for today. Call in tomorrow before you drive in to see if operations have resumed.”

“Well, crap. Now what?”

“Why not go buy those handguns? You can buy her a purse and if she doesn’t like it, she can exchange it. Women are funny about things like what they like in a purse.”

“You’re telling me. That sounds good, let’s do that. We made that quick run to the store last night and loaded up on a few things. Since we have time, I may make another run and pick up anything I missed. I’ll just have to run the aisles and see if anything trips my trigger.”

“I know several things we can use so I’ll go with you. We’d better get on our cells and let the girls know.”

“Helen? Boeing is shut down for the day. Bill and I are going to pick up the things from the gun shop. Do you have any idea what you might like in a purse?”

“One identical to the one Susan has. Same gun too. Anything else?”

“I’m going to run by the grocery store and run the aisles to see if I missed anything last night.”

“Can you pick me up some Always Infinity Regulars?”

“How many packages?”

“As many as you can without getting overly embarrassed.”

“Anything else?”

“Swiss Miss envelopes. A dozen boxes if they have them. That’s all I can think of.”

“We’ll see you at quitting time.”

“Oh, they’re letting us go at 2pm. I was going to call you over your lunch hour.”

“See you at two.”

“Susan. Boeing shutdown for today. We’re going to the gun store. How many boxes of Lawman did you need?”

“A full case if they have it. You wouldn’t be going by the grocery store would you?”

“As a matter of fact, we are. What do we need?”

“Mainly meat. Bacon, sausage, ground round, a nice roast or two if you can find them and maybe a package or two of good steaks. One package of round steak for sure, I want to do stir fry. Three bundles of green onions should be enough for Mongolian Beef. We have the chilies and garlic.”

“Got it. Anything else?”

“Any chance you’re going to Wal-Mart?”

“We can if you want something.”

“Ok. I want two 25 pound bags of bread flour and a dozen three packs of yeast. That should be all besides the things on the list on the refrigerator. They’re letting us out at 2:30 because of the unrest.”

“We’ll be there.”

“George, could you run me by home to pick up our shopping list? Susan wants bread flour from Wal-Mart so I’d appreciate it if we could stop there.”

“No problem. I wanted to get some cash out of our safe anyway.”

We did our shopping, doing the gun store first followed by Costco, Sam’s and Wal-Mart, putting the meat in a cooler. A dozen packages of pads were no more embarrassing than one so I half-filled the basket. I buried them under 18 30-count packages of Swiss Miss single serving packages. More was better because they were on sale and there was no limit. Bill had rather more than I did but I bought more the previous night. I did pick up two additional packages of the ground beef, two large containers of chili powder and extra batteries at Costco. Sam’s provided a case of pasta sauce and pasta to fill in what we’d used since the last time we purchased any.

We had everything done and put away by a little after noon. The store had Galco ankle products on hand or could order other brands. They weren’t that expensive and I decided to give them a try. Galco were the products Bill used. I loaded the ten magazines and put Helen’s new pistol in her bag and my magazine carrier on my left leg and the pistol on my right leg. We also wore our regular pistols on our belts with the spare magazines.

It was around 1 pm when we had everything done. We quickly decided to go to McDonald’s for lunch and get a McRib sandwich, fries and a shake. We had discussed it at Costco and had I gotten a large deluxe pizza for supper and Bill had picked up a twelve

pack of Coors at a liquor store. We rather suspected that Fox or someone would be broadcasting reruns of the press conference sometime during the evening.

We picked up Helen and Susan and filled them in on the plans we made. We dropped Bill and Susan off at their home so she could change and they could get their car. When we got home, Helen went to change into slacks and a blouse and I turned on channel 10. There was more activity in Phoenix than there had been that morning. I guess even looters need sleep. Efforts were being made to channel the escalating violence into the rioters' home turf, with only some success.

The biggest surprise came when they cut from Phoenix to Tucson. Tucson had a black population of less than 5%. The Latino population was around 40% and about seven-eighths of that group were Mexican Americans. A significant portion of that population was out and about and armed to the teeth. Despite attempts to prevent break-ins, many gun stores had been looted. They had a bit of everything from lever action rifles to M-16s.

The demographics of Phoenix duplicated those of Tucson; most of the violence was coming from the black and Latino communities. However, whether spurred by the activities in Tucson or having done it on their own accord, Phoenix gun stores were also being looted. While most stores have varying inventories, there were several stores including the local class three dealers.

The Governor had called up the remainder of the Guard and split them between Tucson and Phoenix. In terms of area, the greater metropolitan Phoenix area was huge when compared to Tucson. Flagstaff was much, much smaller and was briefly mentioned as having 'everything under control'.

I have a statement about the President's condition first and will take questions after. A separate briefing will be held later today by doctors at the National Naval Medical Center.

As of 9am, the President remains in a coma. EEG's have indicated increasing brain activity and the doctors believe it will be just a matter of time before the President regains consciousness.

As to his injuries. The President was struck by one round from what is believed to be a .338 Lapua Magnum sniper rifle. The round struck the President above his left ear traversing from the posterior to the anterior clipping the base of his skull. Had the round been a few millimeters to the right or a few millimeters higher, the wound would have been fatal.

The FBI is in the process of attempting to determine the brand of rifle used. The range that the shot was fired from was in excess of two kilometers and a single round was fired. The location has been identified and the scene is being processed for any clues as to the identity of the sniper. I say sniper because someone capable of making a shot

of that distance and with that degree of accuracy must have had training as a sniper or participated in long range shooting events. The FBI asserts the shooter was more likely a trained sniper because the shot was made at a moving target at great distance.

Questions?

“So he might survive, but they aren’t sure yet. It would be pure speculation at this point as to the extent of his injuries. He was shot in the head from a range in excess of 2,000 meters with a rifle mostly used by military snipers. If it walks like a duck and quacks like a duck...”

“Why not a distance shooter?”

“They shoot at fixed targets, George. Any number of countries have trained snipers including the US, UK, Canada, Israel, half of Europe, Russia, probably China and every police department in the US. You’ve seen those programs on the Military Channel about those sniper contests. They have snipers from all over the world.”

“I guess you’re right. First, there is the distance. Second, there is the wind. Finally, there is the movement. Joe Blow average deer hunter probably couldn’t make a shot like that in 100 years. Even the guy who fired the shot had to be beyond lucky to make a one shot hit in the head at over 2,000 meters.”

“I think I know how they could narrow it down.”

“How?”

“A variation on follow the money. A rifle that shoots the .338 Lapua Magnum round is an expensive rifle and there are probably only a few thousand throughout the world, maybe fewer.”

“Hang on a second and let me check something. Here you go, that’s a list of the countries that use the .338 Lapua Magnum. Count them, 24 countries. Read some of that article here on Wiki. It’s even being used for hunting and custom and semi-custom rifles are being built for it. Too many things beyond the government’s ability check.”

“Ok, it was just a thought. I guess I’m glad he wasn’t shot at 1,000 meters using a .30-06 rifle. Hell, they’d dig up Carlos and slap him in irons.”

“Shhh. They’re talking about businesses closing.”

...was announced earlier that all non-law enforcement offices of the state of Arizona will be closed through the end of the week. In addition, all Dillard’s stores will be closed through the same period. Several manufacturers including Boeing have indicated that they won’t resume production before the first of the week at the earliest.

Governor Brewer called up the remaining members of the Guard and they have been deployed...

“That tears it. I guess we get to sit around and watch Rome burn.”

“George, you’re being over dramatic. We’ve had far worse riots than what’s going on at the moment. We were both kids when King was killed but I remember my folks watching the TV news. One hundred cities rioted.”

“One hundred twenty-five. This is just getting started Helen. It can get worse and just may. I think we just recovered all the initial extra expense we incurred when we had this home built. There is nothing to burn. Even the roof has copper sheeting. I should have gotten those sprinkler systems put in on the peak of the roof and under the eaves, but the eaves are asbestos with no exposed wood.”

“Isn’t that an environmental concern?”

“Maybe, Bill. I’m no environmentalist. I did slap a coat of paint on them so it wouldn’t show. The EPA ban didn’t come in until 1989, well after the home was built. I didn’t want any trouble from anyone and slapped on the coat of paint. Maybe the paint will burn but that would be all.”

“Ok, we know about the Guard being sent to Tucson and Phoenix. For a change, let’s put on the Communist News Network and see what kind of spin ol’ Wolf is putting on things.”

“I take it he’s not one of your favorites.”

“Don’t care for him and didn’t care for Peter Arnett. CNN has had some good reporters like Bernard Shaw. Christiane Amanpour is a little to pro-Islamic but she is an Iranian.”

“What’s your take on Glenn Beck?”

“He’s either a real patriot or a total nutcase. Fortunately his show airs at 5 pm Eastern so I don’t have to watch him. I don’t even have his website in my favorites. On another subject, do you think maybe we need to dig out the rifles and shotguns?”

“Where are they?”

“We originally had them in a gun safe. It was too big for the shelter so I hung racks and use locks. Most of them come with a lock of some kind and if they don’t, we usually buy some kind of cable or trigger lock.”

“You have duplicates of your firearms, don’t you?”

“More or less. I have the National Match and a Super Match. Helen has a Mini-14 and an AC-556. We don’t have duplicate shotguns. I’ve actually looked at the Mossberg 590A1 and almost bought a pair. We have plenty of shotgun shells so maybe if we moved our weapons of choice up here and stored them in the safe, we could handle anything that came up. We could run out to Glendale tomorrow and pick up a pair of the shotguns.”

“Do you have anything in the gun safe?”

“That we do. Cowboy guns.”

“That doesn’t make a lot of sense.”

“Sure it does. What were the .45 Colt and .45-70 originally loaded with?”

“Black powder?”

“Right. I have Lee loaders, primers and Pyrodex. I know you have reloading equipment for the 5.56, 7.62, 9mm and .45acp. I have some smokeless powder, primers and bullets and I figured we could work some kind of deal if push came to shove.”

“How much of the stuff do you have?”

“Enough to reload 20,000 rounds of both rifle calibers, 5,000 rounds of each pistol caliber and 5,000 shotgun shells with 00 or slugs. The black powder stuff is only 10,000 of .45 Colt and 2,000 .45-70. Since we have some 9422s and Single Six’s we bought ten cases of .22LR, divided equally between solid and hollow point. I’m not one for that hyper velocity stuff so we only have two cases of that.”

“And, I thought we had a lot. Of course all of our ammo is boxer primed and I have several reloads worth of components.”

“My ammo counts exclude any surplus we have left over. I still have a dozen cases of that Radway on the strippers in the bandoleers. That’s another 9,000 rounds.”

“It’s getting late and I think we’d better get home before the riots get this far. I’ll come by tomorrow around nine and we can go to Glendale.”

“Susan, why don’t you come by and keep me company while they’re out adding more guns to our already considerable armory?”

“Sure. Feel like baking bread? I have bread flour.”

“So do I. I need to use up some yeast before it gets too old so I’ll provide the yeast and we’ll do six loaves each.”

“That may be a good idea. I think we’ve made our last trip for groceries for a while at least.”

Susan had it in mind that Helen probably had common bread pans and the next morning she only took a partial bag of bread flour when they returned to George and Helen’s. What Helen actually had was the large pans for 24 ounce loaves of bread. Helen was also thinking of baking some French style loaves. Specifically four large standard loaves and two French style loaves. George had gotten her two sets of stainless steel bowls and the largest would hold enough bread dough for six loaves.

George had also acquired a used bread slicer that would handle loaves up to 24 ounces and refurbished it. It worked like a charm provided the bread was allowed to cool to near room temperature. There was a bit of a story connected to the slicer. It was a commercial model typically found in bakeries. It was older than Sam Hill and needed replacement parts that were no longer manufactured. George paid \$25 for it at a going out of business sale.

He carefully dismantled it and listed what he needed to find to restore the machine. In nearly every case, he’d been forced to find a substitute. Over the course of six weeks, he managed to replace all of the parts and clean the machine up to the point where it looked nearly new. It was rather heavy and would have taken up a lot of counter space so he mounted it on a workbench in the basement and Helen had sewn a cover to keep it clean between uses. When it was said and done, they had about \$65 tied up in the machine.

“Do you ladies want anything from the gun store in Glendale?”

“Just the two of you home and in one piece.”

“It may be up to three hours. I’ll call on my cell or the two meter radio if there’s a problem.”

“Just be careful out there.”

“Where did you get those bread pans?”

“I think the name of the company is Chicago Metallic but I can look it up. They were mail order. Each will make a standard 24 ounce loaf. I thought maybe we could do 4 loaves apiece plus 2 French loaves each. The bread will keep for some time in the refrigerator and we should be good for about two weeks.”

“Do you use a special recipe?”

“I don’t know how special it is. I got it from a bakery and cut it down to six loaves from forty-eight. It makes a nice soft loaf similar to commercial bread without the chemicals.

When the loaves cool, we can use our bread slicer and put the loaves in plastic bags that I bought from another source.”

“Ok. You’ll have to tell me where you found a slicer. Let’s get cracking; it has to rise twice before we can bake it. And you said cool so that will just add more time. In between, we can keep an eye on the news. Where can I put my Hi-Power so it’s not in the way?”

“Set it on top of the gun safe in our study.”

“I suppose you did the same as we did and converted the third bedroom to a study.”

“Only after we learned that we couldn’t have children.”

“Yeah, same here. We regret the fact that we can’t have children but it has its upside. It allowed us to prep to a much higher level. I honestly think we could make it to the end of our normal life spans provided we didn’t develop some malady that we couldn’t treat.”

“I can’t imagine how people with large families manage to set aside enough to get them through any long term event. Of course most of them don’t have an armory the size of ours or the ordnance. Sometimes I look at the pallets of ammo in the basement and wonder what we were thinking of. Having that quantity of ammo presumes that you will prevail in every firefight you may be involved in. It’s like what TOM talks about in his stories. All we’re short of are hand grenades and rockets. I’m talking fragmentation grenades; we have a bunch of smoke.”

“Where did you get those?”

“Some place in Texas. We have three colors, white, red and green.”

“Why three colors?”

“George was a Ranger. They use white for concealment, and red and green to indicate a hot or cold landing zone.”

“Right, you have your own helicopter force to extract you.”

“We don’t but I can’t honestly say that wasn’t what led him to pick those three colors. Well let’s let these two bowls of dough rise and check the news to see if they have an update on the President’s condition.”

“It’s funny, you know. We didn’t vote for him and don’t particularly like him. Still, he is the President and certainly didn’t deserve what happened to him.”

“We both have our fingers crossed that he recovers. For the reasons you mentioned and just because of the downsides if he doesn’t.”

“Such as?”

“Joe Biden as President and the way that the event is tearing this country apart.”

The Trials of George Thomas – Three

“Gentlemen. What’s your pleasure today?”

“Mossberg 590. A1 if you have them in stock.”

“You’re in luck in more ways than one. I have five on hand and it’s before noon.”

“What does noon have to do with anything?”

“Governor Brewer ordered the suspension of firearms sales beginning at noon. We have to close up at that time and won’t reopen until she removes the suspension.”

“Ammo too?”

“No. The order actually shuts us down and requires us to secure all firearms. I’m afraid I don’t have any of the shotguns with the speedfeed stock or the bayonets. I do have what you’ll need to add sling swivels and Mossberg slings or aftermarket slings holding 15 rounds. I also have the side saddles and butt cuffs if you want them.”

“Do you have any buck and ball?”

“I have the Centurion, ten rounds to the box.”

“Ok, two shotguns with the aftermarket slings, side saddles and butt cuffs. Do you have someone to install the side saddles?”

“Sure, it will only take a couple of minutes. Ammo?”

“A full case of the buck and ball if you have it.”

“I actually have several cases.”

“Fine, make it two.”

“Here’s the 4473. You fill that out and I’ll have Sam install the side saddles. As soon as your NICS check clears, you’ll be out the door. If you’ve been through the system before, E-check will clear you almost immediately.”

“We have several firearms. We didn’t have backups for our shotguns and decided this would be as good of time as any.”

“What are your other shotguns?”

“Remington 870s.”

“I have those too.”

“Thanks but I’ll stick with what I’m buying.”

“Ok, that’s two shotguns, two sling swivel sets, two slings, two side saddles, two butt cuffs and two cases of Centurion buck and ball. You total is...”

“Thank you. Everything is in the boxes except for the ammo. Sam, come give the man a hand loading his purchases. Now you, sir; what can I do for you?”

“Do you have two cases of Remington 3”, 15 pellet, 00 buck?”

“Yes. I’ll get them. Ok, that will be two cases at \$199 per case plus tax. Your total is...”

“You like those Magnum shells?”

“It depends on the situation. We keep a pair of our shotguns loaded with these heavier loads.”

“I suppose a person can never have too many shotgun shells. I think I’ll get a case myself and two gun socks.”

“They have a pretty good kick.”

“So do the 3” Brenneke Black Magic slugs. We have the Home Tactical Defense reduced recoil shells for Helen.”

“What do you suppose they’re doing?”

“Baking bread. Helen mentioned doing four 24 ounce loaves and two French loaves for each of us. We have an old bread slicer I rebuilt.”

“Maybe we should get one.”

“Don’t bother. A unit like the one we have goes for around \$1,300 new. I paid \$25 for the one we have and put \$40 worth of parts in it to get working again. It’s fine for home use but wouldn’t last long in a bakery. Oh, oh. I think we should have taken a different route.”

“Turn around and backtrack a ways and we’ll try a different approach. I’ll load the shotguns.”

“Use that buck and ball. Load the two shotguns first and then the side saddles. Next do the butt cuffs and finally the slings. Between the shotguns and our pistols, we should have more firepower than we need; assuming we need it. Once you’re done with the

shotguns, slip them into those socks I bought. There's no sense in announcing what we have."

I have a statement about the President's condition first and will take questions after. A separate briefing will be held later today by doctors at the National Naval Medical Center.

As of 10 am this morning, the President is conscious but heavily sedated. His condition is considered critical but stable. In lay terms, he is expected to live although his condition at the moment is not improving. So far, doctors have been unable to determine any lasting effects relating to the gunshot.

At the moment, there is no pending legislation on the President's desk awaiting signature. Bills have been introduced in both the House and Senate to reinstate the Assault Weapons Ban. I understand that the Senators and Representatives who introduced the bills will have statements later today.

Acting President Biden has declared a national state of emergency and activated military units pursuant to the Insurrection Act. A state of martial law exists for the entire country and Habeas Corpus has been suspended until order is restored. National Guard units and state Defense Forces remain under the control of the individual Governors. A dusk to dawn curfew has been imposed. Orders have been issued to shoot looters on sight. Any person involved in violence of any description will be arrested and detained.

Secretary Gates has a press conference scheduled for 1 pm to discuss the ongoing activities in Afghanistan.

Questions?

"I don't like the sound of that. You know, Helen, that the Gun Control Act of '68 was a result of hysteria concerning the assassinations of JFK, RFK and Martin Luther King. This is going to give the anti-gun lobby more fuel to throw on the fire."

"Nobody is going to be happy until the 2nd Amendment is totally gutted are they?"

"Probably not. I think it's probably time to punch down and knead the bread."

"My, look at that. Feeding the yeast worked better than I thought it would. I'll use the table and you can use the island. There's a scale to weigh the dough so we can be sure to get 24 ounces in each loaf. We'll divide what's left into two equal sized loaves for the French bread."

"Do you have enough oven space?"

"There's the oven in the stove and those two wall ovens. That should be more than enough."

“You actually weigh the dough?”

“It keeps the loaves uniform.”

After kneading, the dough was weighed and placed in the bread pans to rise. We combined the leftover dough and weighed it. It was then divided into four equal weight loaves and placed on a pair of cookie sheets to rise. We hadn't baked the bread by the time Bill and George returned.

“Any trouble?”

“We had to make on detour. Bill, let's put the shotguns in the gun safe.”

“Loaded or unloaded?”

“Leave them loaded.”

“You were driving your pickup with loaded shotguns inside?”

“I told you we had to make a detour. We were a little close to downtown Phoenix and the problems were beginning to spill over onto 10. We backed up and took the transition to 101 and went around the city. There were fires burning in Phoenix.”

“We watched the White House press conference. The President is conscious but heavily sedated. His condition is critical but stable. Martial law has been declared with a dusk to dawn curfew for the entire nation. Some Congress critters are using what happened as an excuse for a new Assault Weapons Ban.”

“So is he going to be ok?”

“That is undetermined. What's with the three cases of shotgun shells?”

“Two cases of buck and ball and a case of 3”, 15 pellet, 00 buckshot.”

“That's for you, right? You know how much I hate those 3” Brenneke slugs.”

“It is. I thought you might like to try the buck and ball. It has one 65 caliber ball and 6 #1 buckshot balls. Recoil should be about normal.”

“Can you point the camera to the west? Maybe we can see the smoke from the fire.”

“I'll call you when it's pointed.”

“I've got it. Bill, you are not going to believe this. Check out the amount of smoke.”

“That’s at least double or triple what we saw when we skirted around town.”

“It looks like much of downtown Phoenix is burning.”

“Let Susan and me see. Oh Lord, look at that. You watch it Susan and I’ll check the bread.”

Helen checked the bread and started the ovens. It was almost ready to bake. She returned to the living room and switched the TV from channel 10 to Fox News. Fox was flipping from city to city showing the violence and the fires. Subtext indicated the source of the violence. Many cities indicated black gangs; others indicated mixed black and Latino gangs while still others indicated Latino gangs or Latino citizens. She went to the study and practically dragged the other three to the living room. She then went to the kitchen, started the bread baking, set the timer and, finally returned to the living room. Below the subtext Fox was now scrolling a list of cities with outbreaks of violence.

When the name Mesa, AZ scrolled across the bottom of the screen, they quickly changed to channel 10.

“Hey, that’s our house. Can I use your computer?”

“It’s in the study, help yourself.”

“I’ll be right back.”

As they watched, water began to cascade down Bill and Susan’s roof and from under the eaves. The roll down shutters also began to close. Bill returned shortly.

“The only thing better than having waterlines protecting your home is having remote control of those waterlines. Did you notice the shutters scrolling shut?”

“They worked just fine honey.”

“How did you do that?”

“The shutters have electrical controls and a master switch that will close all of them at the same time. I added a parallel remote controlled switch across the master. We have an old laptop connected to the internet 24/7 with a two page website. I can bring up a menu of the controls in our home. There are mainly three, one for the shutters and two for the water systems. Are your shutters electrical or manual?”

“Most are manual. Only the garage doors are electric.”

“Hey, someone has a Molotov cocktail.”

“He’s going to be awfully disappointed, look.”

The glass liquor bottle arched through the air striking just under an eave and breaking, igniting a fire. The water quickly washed the gasoline off and extinguished the fire. A second bottle hit a shutter, breaking and burning. It too was quickly extinguished as the water washed away the gasoline. A National Guard soldier came upon the scene and the bomber quickly disappeared.

"I've never tested it with homemade napalm. I believe it would probably work just as well."

"Homemade napalm?" Helen asked.

"Gasoline with soap in it," I explained. "Another recipe uses Styrofoam. Put gasoline in a metal pail and add pieces of Styrofoam. Stir until dissolved and continue adding Styrofoam until you have a thick syrup. Do not touch homemade napalm."

"How do you know?"

"Made a batch in the Army for a class on expedients. The instructor explained the soap method but advised against it because you have to heat the gas to dissolve the soap. I have a 3 gallon metal pail, several cans of gas and a dozen 100 count bundles of Styrofoam cups. In a pinch..."

"You're nuts!"

"Prepared. Unlike those PAW fiction stories, it's difficult to find Raufoss, LAW rockets or hand grenades."

"You want a can?" Bill asked.

"A can of what?"

"Raufoss. I have two cans of the bulk ammo. You can have one for just what I paid for it, \$600."

"I didn't know you had a .50 caliber rifle."

"Tac-50, same as yours. Different optics and the Elite suppressor. Most of my ammo is Hornady. I have 100 rounds that I recycle and have the remainder stored. When the brass wears out, I buy another 100 rounds. I've only fired ten rounds of the Raufoss to adjust the scope. I noted the settings in my shooting book and returned the scope to the Hornady settings."

"How about grenades and rockets?"

"I bought 6 white smoke grenades from Ammunition to Go. If you're talking about concussion or fragmentation grenades, we don't have any. That goes for incendiary and non-lethal as well. I don't know anyone who could supply rockets."

"What about the person who sold you the Raufoss?"

"At the time, the Army was using the M136 AT-4 and he wanted way too much per unit. It was only after the Iraq war started that the M136 was totally discontinued and replaced by the Javelin, AT-4CS and the M-72 LAW for a second time. The M72s were in short supply and almost all of them went to active duty personnel. He did say that should some fall off a truck, they'd run \$750 for a carton of five and two grand for case of 15. Anyway that was a while back and he reached twenty and retired."

"I suppose we could whip some napalm if it became necessary. I have four cases of cheap wine bottles I picked at a brewing shop. The fences we have seem to do a good job of preventing entry but as we saw, they can't prevent someone from attempting to firebomb us. Give me a hand and we'll bring the rifles up from the shelter."

"Let me shut down the water first. What are you using for magazines for the Super Match?"

"Twenty-five round CMI magazines loaded with M118LR ammo. We each have two vests, all FMCO CVS-M10 twenty magazine vests. The vest I use with my National Match is the same except the magazines are T-57 20-round magazines loaded with Radway surplus. Helen didn't really need two vests but we got them anyway. They're the same vest, CVS-10 twenty magazine vests. They have patrol packs and can hold 2 3 liter water pouches. We only carry one because of the weight. I had to special order the 25 round magazine pouches since they only carry 20 round pouches for the M14. I may pull some of the pouches to reduce the overall weight."

"Five hundred rounds of 7.62 plus 3 liters of water? I hope to tell you that would be heavy."

"Plus 2 white smoke and one each green and red smoke. We finally settled on full vests with a magazine in our rifle. We've tried moving around with the fully loaded vests and it's very difficult for both of us. We also tried cutting the number of magazines to ten and carrying a pouch of shotgun shells along with our 870s. That was doable. I suppose what we really need to do is start a regimen and get into shape like I was when I finished boot camp. I was a lot younger then and really doubt either of us could do it."

"Let me help you with that vest for your Super Match. My God, how much does this thing weigh?"

"Around forty pounds, without the water. With the water, closer to fifty."

"Plus the smoke grenades?"

“Another 4-5 pounds. I have 8 spare magazines for my Tac-50. When I’m carrying that and all 10 magazines, I have about the same load. The ammo goes just under 5 ounces per round so each magazine weighs in the neighborhood of two pounds plus. That’s another fifty pound load with rifle, scope, suppressor and ammo. Don’t really need smoke grenades when you’re that far from the target.”

“So, the two of you have practiced?”

“You mean with the loads? Of course we have. We had to get everything adjusted just so and needed to know what to expect. It would be ill advised to accumulate the equipment and other things and not try it out. The upside to the way we did it is that we can always reduce our load while having the capacity to carry more.”

“George, check the camera. Channel 10 changed their shooting location and it appears that the rioters are headed this way.”

“You check the camera and I’ll check the shutters. Bill, there’s room beside the garage to move your vehicle to the backyard. Don’t worry about the landscaping; I can fix it with a rake. The garage side door is also electric.”

“I’m on it.”

“Helen, the timer went off.”

“Check the bread and if it’s done take it out. There’s a tub of butter in the refrigerator and a pastry brush in the drawer to the right of the stove if you want to make butter top.”

“Will it keep longer without the butter?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll skip the butter then.”

“The cooling racks are already set out. Transfer the bread from the pans and cookie sheets to the racks.”

“The shutters are all down. Bill and Susan’s vehicle is in the back yard. Can you see anyone on the camera?”

“Not yet.”

“I hate to ask. What were you planning for supper?”

“I suppose we could heat a couple of half gallon jars of the homemade canned chili.”

"I'll get a jar from the basement and set it on the kitchen counter."

"Uh... thanks. I think I'll help Susan with the bread and come back here and keep an eye on the CCTV camera."

"Ok. I think I'll switch back and forth between channel 10 and Fox News. That way we can keep track of the national scene and the home front. I really don't understand this. If President Obama is recovering, why is this escalating?"

"Maybe the rioters are just using the current events as an excuse to vent their built up frustration."

"That could be part of it, for sure. I rather suspect that there is more to this than a simple venting of frustration and anger over our first black President being shot."

"GEORGE, COME BACK IN HERE!"

"What are you shouting for?"

"Look. They're only two blocks away. It looks like they're pulling some kind of cart filled with bottles of gasoline and throwing at houses randomly."

"You know the exterior is fireproof."

"But what if some of the gasoline leaked through a crack in one of the shutters? We don't have a wash down system like Bill and Susan have."

"If you want George, we can each take a shotgun and go out the back door. If one of those people starts to throw a Molotov cocktail we can put them down and no one would blame us."

"There is so little danger of a Molotov cocktail doing any damage, I don't see the need."

*First they came for the Jews and I did not speak out because I was not a Jew.
Then they came for the Communists and I did not speak out because I was not a Communist.*

Then they came for the trade unionists and I did not speak out because I was not a trade unionist.

Then they came for me and there was no one left to speak out for me.

"I've heard something like that before. Who said that?"

"Martin Niemöller, a German Protestant minister in Nazi Germany. The origins of the poem have been traced to a speech given by Niemöller on January 6, 1946, to the representatives of the Confessing Church in Frankfurt. There are several versions floating

around. My point is we should do something to stop these people from continuing their rampage.”

“Was he the guy who said that next to Hitler, Truman was the biggest killer?”

“That’s the guy. He was referring to the atom bombs. He overlooked Stalin and, of course, Mao came later.”

“Each shotgun has 34 rounds of buck and ball. Do you want to take a few more boxes of that or some of the 15 pellet we bought today?”

“Two or three boxes of the 15 pellet should be more than enough.”

“Helen, it will be faster if we go out the side door of the garage. Come with us and close it behind us. If things go to hell on us, grab the two M1As. If we need concealment, we’ll toss out one or two of the white smoke.”

“Be careful you two.”

“Me too. You have both pistols honey?”

“They’re my American Express card Susan.”

“Huh?”

“He never leaves home without them, Helen.”

“Karl Malden, right?”

“Right.”

“We’d better hurry, they’re getting close.”

“Bill you take the other side of the house and I’ll take this one. Give me 2 boxes of the 15 pellet. At this range, they wouldn’t have a chance if we need to use that.”

“Be safe.”

“You too.”

I watched them walking down the middle of the street pulling a garden cart half filled with bottles of gasoline. They seemed to be picking houses at random. Since all of the houses in our neighborhood were the same basic construction with masonry exteriors, they weren’t having much luck throwing the bottles at the sides of the homes. Three houses down, the guy doing the throwing raised his aim and hit the roof. The half-filled bottle of gasoline broke and the asphalt shingles caught fire.

The SOB paused in front of our house and lit another bottle. BOOM, BOOM. Both Bill and I had fired stopping him dead in his tracks. He fell, dropping the bottle in the process and it broke, setting him on fire. One of the people with him had some kind of AK and he started to fire alternately towards where Bill and I were located. BOOM, BOOM. Two down and five to go. Except the remaining five took off like they were fleeing an elephant stampede, leaving the cart and most dropping their firearms.

Helen opened the garage door after I pounded on it and I told her to call the cops and fire department. Bill and I would standby and preserve the scene. She handed me a ten pound dry chemical fire extinguisher to douse the flames on the guy burning up out in the street.

“Cover me; I’m going to put out the fire. Helen is calling the police and fire department.”

“Do you think they’ll be here anytime soon?”

“I don’t know but we just ended one of their headaches so maybe they will.”

Considering the situation, their response time was reasonable, twenty minutes. We laid our shotguns on the ground and stepped away from them. We were instructed to lay our P-14s on the ground next to the shotguns and step back. I expected to be patted down but they started asking questions.

“What happen here?”

“There was a group of seven walking down the center of the street throwing fire bombs, randomly, at houses. We saw them coming and decided that if we didn’t stop them here, they could easily burn down several more homes. We grabbed our shotguns and each of us took one side of the house. When crispy critter there cocked his arm to throw a fire bomb on my house we both shot him. He obviously dropped the bottle which broke and fried him. One of his companions had an AK type and we dropped him when he started shooting. The other five took off. Some of them dropped their firearms and I had my wife put in the call to you folks and the fire department. Bill and I secured the scene until you got here. I put the fire out with that extinguisher sitting over there. That’s about it.”

“Identification?”

“Here you go, George Thomas.”

“How about you.”

“Here’s my driver’s license and ccw, Bill Collins.”

“Mr. Thomas, do you have a ccw?”

“Yes, sorry. Here you go. What’s the deal with the ccw, they are no longer required.”

“Having one indicates that you been through a background check. We’ll get the coroner out to pick up the bodies. My partner is marking the locations of the weapons, taking snapshots and we’ll collect them. It may be a day or more before detectives are able to get out here to interview you two and your wife. The detectives will either be Mesa PD or Maricopa County. We’re spread very thin.”

“Is that really necessary?”

“Two people are dead and you both admit to shooting them. Standard procedure is to collect your shotguns until the case is resolved one way or the other. All things considered, we’re allowing people to retain their firearms where the shooting appears to be justified. That’s highly irregular but those are orders from on high. Crime scene investigators are on the way. Show me where you fired from, we need to collect the hulls and get pictures.”

“So, we aren’t headed for jail?”

“We have no place to put you. The Sheriff’s camps are full and he’s run out of pink underwear,” he chuckled. “Are you both staying here?”

“Bill, do Susan and you want to stay overnight? Our wives baked bread and chili is on the menu.”

“I’ll ask her. If she says yes, I’d like to run over to our house and pick up a few things.

“I guess that’s up for grabs officer.”

“No problem, I have both addresses. Your company shut down?”

“It’s Boeing. Bill’s wife works for the state and my wife works for a law firm in downtown Mesa. All four of our employers are shut down through the end of the week.”

“A word to the wise; call before you find yourselves in a position where you are forced to shoot someone else.”

◦

“What did Susan say?”

“You’re sure this won’t inconvenience you?”

“We have a spare bedroom for guests. I saw the chili on the stove heating so it’s no inconvenience at all. The bed in the guest room is king size so you shouldn’t be cramped.”

“I’m going to make my CCTV camera available over the net. The coding is already written and tested out. I’ve tested it from work and it rotates, tilts and zooms. Mainly I came for some clothing and the fresh food in the fridge. I’m also going to take our weapons, magazines and some ammo, just in case.”

“You don’t think this will fizzle fairly soon?”

“It might, but why take chances when you don’t have to? It’s these reports about the non-gang member Latinos that have me concerned. These drug cartels seem to have standing armies and are now working both sides of the border. Couple that with the violence promulgated by the non-gang member Latinos and I’m really concerned.”

We loaded what he wanted to take and drove back home. After unloading the food and hauling it to the kitchen, we took the two suitcases to the guest bedroom. Finally, Bill put his firearms in the gun safe and we sat down to clean the shotguns

“The SOB never knew what hit him. I might get some of that buck and ball the next chance I get.”

“Use as much as you need and you can replace it later. Remind me after supper and we’ll drag out some of those Brenneke 3” Magnum slugs. I think I’ll bring the other firearms up here from the shelter while we’re at it.”

“It’s a good thing you have the large safe.”

“Bought it used. It was an expensive safe and the previous owner had to get a bank loan to finance the purchase. No kidding, it cost around eight grand with all the extras. He filed for bankruptcy and the bank ended up with the safe. We were looking for a safe at the time and I saw an ad in the Republic. We had the money for an economical safe but not for that monster. The bank only wanted what was the principal due on the loan. Of course we had to haul it and that’s where you and the other guys from work got involved. You remember the trouble we had getting it out of his house and into the trailer and the good luck we had getting into our study? It’s the biggest Fort Knox that was available when he bought it.”

“Where do you store your powder, primers and the like?”

“In those two large locked cabinets in the basement.”

“Good plan, I do the same. The cabinets next to my reloading bench have the components. This is very good chili. How did you get it prepared so fast?”

“We canned it in half gallon jars after cooking it for several hours so the beans were tender. I know real chili isn’t supposed to have beans but we prefer it this way. There are three types of beans in it, pinto, kidney and Piquito. If you want to know about those beans, look up Santa Maria Style BBQ on Wiki. Quart jars were too small so we used half gallon.”

“Helen the bread is great too. Did you do anything different?”

“Same old bread recipe. Maybe it’s the chili and the companionship.”

“I hope they get a handle on this violence soon. When I switched to Fox briefly, they were airing the second great Chicago fire. Sheppard Smith said that over 200 cities were involved and the number was increasing by the hour. He mentioned several Muslim groups that had banded together to protect themselves from the spreading violence. Dearborn, Michigan has a large Muslim population and Detroit a large Black Muslim population. The 10 states with the largest Muslim populations are California, New York, Illinois, New Jersey, Indiana, Michigan, Virginia, Texas, Ohio, and Maryland.”

“That’s just great. I can understand the black population reacting to the assassination attempt. I have problems seeing how that applies to the Latino population. If the Muslims get mixed up in this fur ball, we’re could potentially have an all-out race war in this country and you’d need a program to know the players.”

“Bill, honey, not while we eat. Save it for later if you must discuss this.”

“Ok Susan. Still... ok.”

There was little of the chili left at the end of the meal. A full loaf of French bread had disappeared too. Bill and I hauled the remaining firearms and equipment from the shelter along with the case of Brenneke slugs. Our wives were engaged watching the news on TV and Bill and I went into the study where he resumed his comments about a looming race war. I agreed with him to a point, the business about the blacks and Latinos. And Sheppard Smith did say it was spreading and accelerating.

“Do you really believe we’ll get into a full out race war?”

“George, I hope I’m wrong about that. It is a distinct possibility. There is a lot of bottled up hate in this country between various groups. Illegal immigration has been a problem for years and it seems like they periodically solve the problem by declaring an amnesty for the illegal immigrants we already have. Nine eleven didn’t do the American Muslims any good. Whether a person is an illegal or tenth generation Hispanic American, they seem to be treated the same. The same applies to Muslims although they couldn’t have all been on the planes.”

“And, the blacks?”

“What about the blacks? A similar yet different problem; they were brought to this country in chains as slaves. We had a Civil War where slavery was a peripheral issue. Truth be told, the Civil War was over economic issues and culture. After the blacks were freed, they had few opportunities available to them. That’s part of the reason so many ended up in cities like Detroit. The issue has never been fully resolved and with the entitlement programs, we now have fourth and fifth generations on the dole.”

“But why burn it down?”

“The government will find the money to rebuild and people will have jobs doing the rebuilding; at least for a while. They’ve burned down Watts in 1965 and 1992 and both times it was rebuilt.”

There was a buzz from the gate. It was the crime scene investigators and they needed to collect evidence and take statements. This time it included Helen because she made the 911 call. They didn’t finish up the questioning until after 10pm. The other investigator was outside the entire time gathering evidence and taking dozens of pictures. The medical examiner/coroner showed up and finally removed the two bodies.

We went back to the TV and after a bit, called it a night.

The Trials of George Thomas – Four

We were up early the next morning and the TV was on before the coffee finished dripping. Helen set out boxes of cereal, bowls and spoons. We gathered in the living room mesmerized by the ongoing events. Vast portions of the residential portions of the country were going up in smoke and people were evacuating. The Department of Defense cooperated by opening up portions of military installations for the refugees. If there were FEMA Camps, they weren't in evidence.

Large military tents were being erected and various kinds of food being offered including MREs, T-Rations, and whatever the commissary and post exchanges could locate. A large supply of Mountain House foods appeared as if by magic from wherever the government had stored them. That broke the back and forth about whether or not the federal government had been buying Mountain House foods. They had, but apparently not in the quantity everyone assumed because they were used up practically overnight.

"Where did you get your emergency food supplies?"

"Helen and I bought from several sources. Walton Feed and Emergency Essentials in the beginning based on what you told me that first time. Then later, like you, we bought from Costco, Sam's Club, Wal-Mart and a few other online LTS sources. We have quite a mix, Mountain House, Provident Pantry, a little of this and a little of that. We even have a half dozen cases of MREs stored in the shelter to make them last as long as possible. We rotated them out earlier this year so they're fresh. They're the civilian version, not the military, SOPAKCO's Sure-Pack."

"Really? What else do you have in the way of things of that nature?"

"If you mean Bugout supplies, we have Kifaru packs, Cabela's Magnum game carts with the dual wheel sets and wheel shields. At the minimum, we'd load the carts and put them in the back of the pickup. We'd head for Tonto National Forest and get as far as we could and then hoof it the rest of the way. Unfortunately it's mostly uphill all the way. We have 10 5-gallon cans of diesel fuel for the truck and the motor is so old there aren't any electronic components."

"Why Tonto?"

"At two point nine million acres, it's the largest National Forest in Arizona and the fifth largest National Forest in the country. There is plenty of game, several lakes or reservoirs, streams and unlimited firewood."

"Have you checked it out?"

"Oh yeah. That's how I knew about the uphill grade."

"We were considering the Coconino or the Prescott because they're close. There are also the Coronado, Apache-Sitgreaves and Kaibab."

"Is that old pickup of yours diesel?"

"Gasoline. No computers and we have two sets of spare ignition parts. We have a bit more gas, 12 cans. How did we get off on the subject of bugging out?"

"I mentioned the SOPAKCO's MREs."

"Ah, right. Where did you get the game carts?"

"Cabela's Glendale."

"If we can do it, do you want to go back to Glendale? I can get some of the 3" Brenneke Black Magic slugs and some buck and ball. Then see if Cabela's has any game carts in stock."

"I should have explained better. The capacity without the double wheel set is 550 pounds and 700 pounds with. The wheel shields keep it from becoming tangled in underbrush. The entire package runs about two hundred."

"One final question. What kind of knives do you carry?"

"Buck folding hunters and Cold Steel San Mai Laredo Bowies. We also have Gerber Mark IIs."

"The old model or the new model?"

"The new model with the serrations. How about you?"

"Randall made 11" Confederate Bowies, model 2 5" boot knives and Spyderco Harpies. Not as expensive as the San Mai Laredo Bowie but every bit as good."

"If people could hear us talk, they'd think we were a pair of cold blooded killers."

"Ready to take off?"

"Helen, Bill and I are going to run an errand."

"Now what?"

"We're going back to Glendale and pick up what we forgot to buy."

"Yeah, right. I thought you told me the gun stores were closed."

“We’re not going to buy more guns. We’re going for two game carts and some ammo.”

The gun store where Bill and I bought the shotguns and ammo was closed. Cabela’s carried a full line besides the firearms and was open. They had the game carts, wheel sets and wheel shields in stock and Bill got two complete units. The clerk said the manufacturer went out of business and these were the last two they had. They were selling ammo but not firearms and Bill got two cases of buck and ball and two cases of the 3” Brenneke Magnum slugs.

I also got another case of the 3”, 15 pellet, 00 buckshot. I never saw a case of ammo that wasn’t begging me to take it home and I was a soft touch. All of our Mountain House and Provident Pantry products were in #10 cans and I selected an assortment of single and double serving entrées, breakfast items and deserts. Although we had several pounds of homemade trailmix aka gorp, we were low on jerky and I grabbed six one pound packages of beef. Our homemade gorp included M&Ms, honey roasted mixed nuts, raisins and banana chips. A handful or two of gorp and three or four pieces of jerky could be eaten on the go and provided fuel for the furnace.

We were home before lunch and when we arrived two Mesa detectives were discussing the shooting with Helen and Susan.

“Could we see some identification please?”

“Here you go.”

“Here’s mine,” Bill responded handing over his driver’s license.

“In the interest of resolving this quickly, we’ll each ask you a few questions and then switch. In all probability, we can give you an outcome before we leave.”

I went into the kitchen with one detective and Bill went into the study with the other. I recounted the event in as much detail as I could remember and was amazed how accurately I remembered the event. Of course, it’s not every day that you shoot two people. Bill came into the kitchen and I went to the study where I endured essentially the same experience as I had in the kitchen. When we finished we both went to the living room and the detectives consulted in the kitchen.

“Your explanations match what you told the officers and what the crime scene investigators and the initial medical exam revealed. No charges will be brought as you were acting in justifiable self-defense. The individual with the Molotov cocktail was not killed outright proving that the cocktail was burning when you shot him. The empty casings near the AK indicate that that individual fired on you.”

“How can you tell that he wasn’t killed outright?”

“Burn marks where he inhaled the hot gases from the fire. While the gunshots would have been fatal, the inhaled gases will be listed as the cause of death. If it weren’t for all that is occurring, we’d probably have a prosecutor review the case before it was closed. As it is, they’re besieged with clear cut cases of criminal activity.”

“Are others being let off too?”

“Some are and some aren’t. Crime scene investigation isn’t like they show on TV but the investigators are talented people. Sometimes it’s obvious how the event transpired. For instance, one case we’re pursuing is similar to yours except the guy shot first and then lit the gas bomb and tossed it at the body. Dead people don’t breathe so they don’t get burn marks in their nasal passages. He shot the guy between the eyes with a .30-06 using soft point hunting ammo. He didn’t call it in, his neighbor did. The neighbor saw the whole thing.

“The officers indicated that they advised you to call it in before taking action on your own. We strongly advise that you take that advice. From the appearance of this home, there isn’t much that could catch fire. You may wish to put out a hose or two to wash down any fire should this come up again. We’re responding as rapidly as possible to these arson cases and our response times are improving with the additional Guard members here. Ok. That’s it.”

“I kind of feel sorry for that guy they arrested.”

“Why?”

“If his neighbor hadn’t been watching, he might have gotten away with it. Even though he killed the bad guy outright, the bad guy could have had the Molotov cocktail already lit. The results would have been exactly the same.”

“I think it’s more a case of the crime scene evidence supporting the neighbor’s statement than the other way around.”

“Hurry, Gibbs is about to make another statement. He looks ghastly.”

I have a statement about the President’s condition first and will take questions after. A separate briefing will be held later today by doctors at the National Naval Medical Center.

As of 10:30 am this morning, President Obama is once again unconscious. The doctors have determined that a small bullet fragment that they missed during the first surgery is pressing on a critical portion of his brain. They have stated that once the fragment is removed, the President should regain consciousness and a full recovery is expected. They have scheduled a news conference at the hospital for 5 pm, after the surgery is completed and the President is out of the post op unit.

Acting President Biden has called for the temporary surrender of all assault weapons in the hands of the public. The weapons will be tagged and returned to their owners once peace has been restored. The order includes all high capacity magazines; those being any magazine with a capacity of more than ten rounds.

Questions?

“That was the press conference that was held a little over two hours ago. Within the past few minutes, the National Rifle Association has filed an ex parte request for a temporary restraining order staying the Acting President’s order with the federal district court.”

“Surprise, surprise.”

“What?”

“Joe Biden wrote the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. One of the most noted sections was the Federal Assault Weapons Ban.”

“I don’t know about you George, but it will be a cold day in hell before they get any of our weapons. I do think it would be wise to move everything except the shotguns and our small capacity pistols to our shelter. And, the sooner the better.”

“They’re all here in the gun safe, let’s do it.”

The fact that Bill and Susan’s shelter was under their garage was a tremendous incentive to move the firearms. Just which firearms the Acting President intended to include in his ‘temporary’ ban had not been disclosed. Left to the BAFTE, it could even include lever action .22 rifles. We had acquired standard vent rib Rem Choke 3” cylinder, 26” barrels for our 870s and because Remington sold the Express combos, I assumed that they wouldn’t raise quite the fuss that they would over the Mossberg 590A1s, a common military shotgun before the Benelli M1014. Shotguns don’t wear out quickly and the Marines Corps was still using the 590A1s to fight the war.

We moved everything except the 9mm and .45acp ammo and shotgun shells. Bill had brought a can of the Raufoss over when he moved their clothing, fresh food and firearms and it went right back to their shelter where it had been stored initially. All of Helen’s and my firearms had been purchased with a form 4473s and there was a record. When I mentioned it to Bill, he admitted that all of theirs were also purchased through dealers. We didn’t have real or counterfeit bills of sales to explain the absence of the firearms. None of the title II firearms had been reported as stolen and none of the title II firearms had a transfer tax paid on them so they were still registered in our names. Title II firearms include 6 categories: Machine guns, short-barreled rifles, short-barreled shotguns, destructive devices, silencers, and 'Any Other Weapons'. Switchblades and those Russian Spetsnaz ballistic knives are both prohibited by a different federal law; the former in 1958 and the latter by a 1986 amendment to the former law.

Those 230 rounds of Raufoss were destructive devices; collectively we had more than a dozen silencers including the Mark II; and, we had that AC-556. All of which meant that we'd be some of the first people to be checked. Because we were more than a little convinced that the ongoing violence and rioting wouldn't be brought under control any-time soon, we wanted to retain every weapon we possessed.

The Trials of George Thomas – Five

Tonto:

We began discussing bugging out in earnest with Bill and Susan readily agreeing that the Tonto National Forest was probably a better choice than the two locations they had selected. They had a trailer his pickup could pull while that was about midway down our list of possible acquisitions. While Bill, Susan and Helen discussed what we should take, I checked the want ads for a used trailer. There was a single ad for a 6x12 enclosed trailer with a number to call. When I called the woman who answered confirmed they still had the trailer and gave me an address to check it out.

“Bill, I may have located a trailer for our pickup. If you’re interested, I appreciate you helping me check it over.”

“We were at a stopping point anyway. Where are we going?”

“The west side out by ASPC Perryville. It’s in Buckeye off exit 121.”

“What kind of trailer?”

“It’s a 6x12 enclosed trailer. She said it was a U-Haul trailer acquired when U-Haul was replacing worn out models. Wants \$750 obo.”

“Do you have the cash?”

“Yes, that and more. I’m afraid our rainy day fund is beginning to need an addition. I’ll go by the bank on the way and pull out another grand for emergency cash.”

The trailer had been repainted although poorly. The original U-Haul paint job was still visible beneath the new paint and the new paint was in fact very new. The tires looked to be good with little weather checking. We jacked up one side and the wheel spun smoothly indicating it had a good layer of grease.

“Do you have the title and registration?”

“U-Haul took care of the transfer and we haven’t received the papers in the mail yet. I can forward them when they come.”

I noticed that Bill raised his eyebrows at her response.

“The best I can go is five hundred cash.”

“Gee, I don’t know. Cash you say?”

“Cash; and you mail me the title and registration when they come in.”

“Ok, deal. I’ll write out a Bill of Sale.”

Bill raised his eyebrows a second time. I counted out the cash and we hooked the trailer to my hitch. She handed me the handwritten Bill of Sale and we headed back to Mesa.

“That trailer is probably hotter than a three dollar pistol.”

“Why do you think that?”

“Because that’s not the way U-Haul handles the sales of their used trailers. Our trailer is a U-Haul. They execute the paperwork at the time of sale and it’s up to the buyer to register the vehicle.”

“Are you sure?”

“It has been a while since we bought ours. Maybe they do it differently now. They have dealers that market their used vehicles these days.”

“The tag is current so we’ll be good for a while. I have a bill of sale so I’m a holder in due course. The worst that could happen is that you’re right and law enforcement seizes the vehicle and I’d be out the five hundred. It wouldn’t hurt to slap another coat of paint on it though. I have a compressor and Wagner spray gun for painting things like the shed out back. It probably wouldn’t do a good job on a vehicle though.”

“Swing by our place and we’ll get my paint gun. I’ve used it to repaint our trailer. We’ll have to stop somewhere and get some paint and paint thinner. I have the filters.”

“Do you think maybe we could get three or four colors and paint in a camouflage scheme?”

“Tan, brown, sage and what else?”

“We can’t use black, it isn’t natural.”

“We could use a light charcoal gray color to represent narrow lines similar to the M81 woodland pattern. The way the paint is faded on your truck, we wouldn’t need to paint it. It’s about six different colors as it is.”

“Know of a paint store on this side of town?”

“Let’s get the Yellow Pages.”

The trailer sale could be totally legitimate and Bill could have been mistaken about U-Haul’s current practices. We would assume that the trailer could be ‘hot’ so it wouldn’t come as a surprise should we get stopped. We nevertheless pulled the thing all around

Phoenix and Mesa getting the paint, the sprayer, Bill's water trap for the compressor, filters and a filter stand.

"Helen, we got the trailer. We're going to put on a base coat of paint. Call us when lunch is ready. It should be dry enough after lunch to add the second color."

"Two colors? Why?"

"Four colors. We're going to paint a camouflage pattern."

"Why?"

"So it's hard to see up in the National Forest?"

"You have an hour. The lasagna is in the oven."

"Homemade?"

"Stouffers."

"Ok, which color first George?"

"Tan base, you think?"

"Should work. Any splatters from the other colors will just improve the effect."

"Paint the whole thing or just random areas?"

"First color the whole thing, I think."

"If you want to get the paint ready, I'll put the water trap on the compressor and drag it out back."

"Go ahead. It will take about ten minutes to get the paint just so."

We had the tan paint on and the equipment cleaned before Helen or Susan called us for lunch. We decided that the sage would be the next color followed by the brown and finally the charcoal gray. The store had run the paint cans through their shaker or whatever you call it. One nice thing about this coat of paint was that it covered the U-Haul paint that showed through.

"Perfect timing. Wash up and take a seat."

"Um, that smells good. Is it ready?"

"It's setting up. It will be when you're washed up. I'm afraid it's buffet style. Help yourselves and grab the garlic bread."

Once we were all seated, Helen asked, "How is the painting going?"

"Good. We have the tan on and are going to do the sage next. It's really drying quickly so we may get the brown on today."

"What's the final color?"

"Charcoal gray. We got that in spray cans and we may just get the entire thing finished today if we get lucky."

"I take it you won't be putting much of charcoal paint on?"

"Just a little shading here and there. Similar to the pattern of those BDUs we have, Woodland Camo."

"They changed uniforms didn't they?"

"Yes. It got started by the Marine Corps with their MARPAT. The Army followed with their ACU and the Air Force with their ABU. In 2008, the Navy came up with the NWU. Grand had a thing on Frugal's showing how well various patterns of camouflage uniforms worked in the German countryside. The Woodland pattern BDUs should work fairly well in Tonto as long as we stay in the timber. They announced that the Army, Air Force and Marine Corps are all going to MultiCam."

"Are we planning on bugging out?"

"Planning, no. It is a consideration as we discussed early this morning. With this trailer, we can take almost 400 cubic feet of additional supplies. With the sideboards on the pickup, we can carry much of our LTS food. The bed holds about 2 cubic yards and we double that with the sideboards. It's only a total of 108 cubic feet even with the sideboards. It's a shame that we don't have sideboards for the trailer."

"George, it would only take a few 1x4s to put sideboards above the roof of the trailer. I don't know if it would be legal but it can be done fairly easily. That would add another 144 cubic feet with 2' sideboards and more if we went higher. You'd probably end up looking like an Okie from Muskogee and make Merle Haggard proud. Personally, I wouldn't go more than 2' higher. However, we could build sideboards for our trailer too. We could have them on and the trailers loaded by tomorrow night if that was what we chose to do. I'll pack my chainsaw."

"Ladies?"

"Oh Bill, I'm not sure."

“George, are you serious?”

“As a heart attack.”

“If that’s the case, we’d better put off the painting and get their trailer loaded and build those sideboards you want. We can store the firearms and ammo in our shelter until we leave.”

“George, I have a better idea. Take Susan and Helen over to our place to load our trailer. Do a quick run to pick up the lumber and then go back and help them finish loading. The sideboards for my pickup are in the shed. Load it after you get back there and get back here before sundown. Meanwhile, I’ll get the paint on the trailer.”

“Fine; before we do that, I’m going to finish my lunch.”

They hadn’t started seizing food yet; that would probably come next. The sooner we could leave the better. With the national curfew in effect we’d have to Bugout in broad daylight. I had thought about adding a 98 gallon cross bed fuel tank to the truck but hadn’t because of the cost of the tank and the cost of filling it. Transfer Flow wanted about \$1,500 for the tank and it would cost another \$400+ to fill it. A man could buy a lot of ammo for \$1,800.

Like Henry Bowman, Bill and Susan Collins, Helen and I were members of the gun culture. It would be difficult to say how many members of the gun culture there were; undoubtedly a lot. One couldn’t go by available statistics, like NRA membership because the NRA had 4 million members for as long as I could remember. I’d joined as a life member when I was in the Army. When Helen and I got married, she became a life member. I knew that Bill was a life member because he said so and I assumed that Susan was too.

The organization had its pros and cons. At times they seemed to take positions opposite of the general view of the membership. They were on Acting President Biden’s order like a duck on a June bug. As of the last time we checked the TV, the judge hadn’t ruled on their request for a temporary injunction. The longer the order remained in effect, the more likely we’d Bugout.

When we returned home, Bill was just putting on the finishing touches with the charcoal spray paint. It looked like the trailer would blend in well with the environment because of the soft blending of colors. We took a break and had some iced tea after which all the firearms were moved to the shelter. Using their trailer as a model, we built two sets of sideboards. And then we unloaded their trailer so we could install the sideboards. It was getting towards dusk when we had their sideboards installed and their trailer reloaded.

It had been a long day and after some discussion, Helen heated some water and we each had a Mountain House entrée. The number of cities burning had fallen by three.

Law Enforcement, National Guard and military units were taking a hard line and they really were shooting looters on sight. The same applied to would be arsonists pulling wagons or carts of half-filled bottles of gasoline.

Instructions on the 'proper' construction of Molotov cocktails were popping up on the internet faster than the authorities could pull them down. The secret to an effective device, it seemed, was leaving some air space in bottle so it would break easier. We'd finish up with our trailer and load it tomorrow. It seemed likely that we would go on up to Tonto the following day.

"Everyone needs a good breakfast to get through the day. Susan said that Bill and she preferred Denver omelets. Do you want the same or a ham and cheese omelet?"

"Could I have a Denver omelet topped with melted cheese? Do we have any hash browns?"

"Go get them from the freezer and I'll start them first. Meanwhile we'll keep chopping onion, green pepper and ham. I only have two omelet pans so it will be in shifts."

"Bill and Susan eat first and then you and me?"

"No, the men eat first and the Ladies second. It will be about thirty minutes from the time you bring the hash browns."

"Ok, ok, I'm moving."

An hour later, Bill and I were attaching the sideboards to our trailer. Once finished, he open the paint cans and used a brush to match the camouflage paint pattern. When we finished that, we began loading the trailer, inside and on top. Before loading the pickup we took off to see how many five gallon gas cans we could find. We had to settle for the Blitz cans from Lowes. They weren't limiting the can purchases. The cans went for ten bucks a pop. Bill bought ten and I bought twelve. Filling them was a bit more challenging. The station I bought my diesel would sell me diesel but no gas. The place Bill bought gas limited him to 25 gallons. But, they let me buy 25 gallons too so he gave me the cash and I paid. Mickey Mouse wasn't in Anaheim, he was alive and well in Mesa.

We rearranged things in Bill's truck and added the extra ten cans after adding PRI-G. We added my ten cans to the twelve I bought that day adding PRI-D to the twelve. We shifted some more things in Bill's truck and added his firearms and ammo. Our firearms were in my pickup on top of the load in the box and beneath the load contained by the sideboards. The ammo was on the bottom. We finished around 2:00pm.

"How long to get to Tonto?"

"It's not that simple. We'll be in Tonto within an hour. However, where I planned to go will take three to four hours pulling the loads we have."

“Fine, four hours. You don’t need to make it any more complicated than that. You already said it was almost three million acres. As long as you know where we’re going and where the last fuel stop is.”

“I may be a little iffy on the last fuel stop, it’s been a while. We’d better get fuel as we can.”

“So, empty your refrigerator into a cooler and let’s shake a leg, we’re burning daylight here.”

“Helen, we’re loaded and can leave now.”

“Have you packed your clothes?”

“No, but that shouldn’t take long.”

“I already packed them. Did you put the game carts with the backpacks on top of the load?”

“I did do that. And, the firearms and ammo are packed except for the shotguns and our smaller pistols.”

“Which shotguns?”

“The 870s.”

“Can you get to the Mossberg’s and our full sized pistols?”

“Yes.”

“Do it while we pack the refrigerator.”

“How did you know...?”

“God gave me two perfectly good eyes. As a matter of fact, Susan has a pair too. She’s having a word with Bill about their shotguns and full sized pistols. Whether this is a good idea or not is yet to be determined. If we’re going to do it, let’s be sensible about it. Y’all have convinced me that they’ll be coming for us first because of our full auto rifle and suppressors. With that in mind, we’re almost ready.”

“How do you want your Mossberg loaded?”

“It has the buck and ball doesn’t it? Just leave it loaded with that. Put them in the gun socks and store them behind the seat.”

“Are we set for camping utensils and plates and flat ware?”

“Blue granite with our usual camping cook set and a cast iron frying pan and dutch oven. It’s that fourteen cup blue granite percolator. It was all together in one of the Rubbermaid boxes I saw you load.”

“What about baking bread?”

“We’ll use both Coleman ovens. We still have quite a bit of the last batch. I also brought the stainless steel bowls. Not counting what’s stored with our LTS, we have an abundance of yeast. Anyway, we have the freeze dried Provident Pantry meats. Before we take off, we should check with the US Forest Service office in Mesa and get the permits.”

“Did you call and check it out?”

“We haven’t had time. You call. Maybe you can find out about fuel availability and so forth.”

I did call. I learned that there would be no fuel available. We would be required to have Tonto passes, one for each 24-hour period we spent in the forest...times two. Due to the fire danger, open fires were not permitted, at the moment, and generally discouraged. I got the address and Bill and I went after enough permits to cover us both for 30 days. It was cheaper to buy annual passes; \$95 versus \$180. When we got home, we squeezed in the 20 pound propane bottles I had for the stoves and lanterns. Fortunately I had two of the posts and several hose sections.

We’d been there before, camping. We knew about the need for propane stoves, thus the preparations. We’d always gotten needed permits at Ranger Stations. We even pulled a permit to cut deadfall or standing deadwood. The Ranger admonished us to cut it but not burn it in the forest. I had the maps of Tonto on my laptop and a solar charger to recharge the batteries, a time consuming process.

We slapped the passes on the rearview mirrors, loaded the last few items and left. It was 3:45pm. It took little time to get to and pass through the boundary of the National Forest. From there, it was uphill most of the way. We’d stopped at the Chevron station with the sign saying, ‘last chance gas’, and topped off our fuel tanks and used the restrooms. We maintained a steady 50mph. This wasn’t a sightseeing trip. Even so, Helen and Susan were on the CBs constantly pointing out the various forest features to one another.

I had a spot in mind and we reached it just as the sun started to become orange settling in the west. The things we’d need the most were near the top of the packed goods and we got the tents erected, the privacy enclosure to the camping toilet erected and the folding tables and chairs unfolded. Helen started two pots, one of coffee and the other

for hot water. It would be another Mountain House meal with home baked bread and strawberry slices for desert.

Bill had provided a pair of matching padlocks for the trailers with keys for everyone. We padlocked the trailers, locked the pickups and sat listening to a radio. It would be a gross understatement to say that things were not good. President Obama was still unconscious; Acting President Biden was becoming emboldened. Those nonexistent FEMA camps were being revealed and opened for the refugees. They weren't seizing everything a person brought, just weapons of any description. Either FEMA had its own source of tents or the military had given up some of theirs.

The camps were fenced, minimally. It was more to funnel people into openings where they could be registered and assigned accommodations. We called it a night and bedded down in our Mountain Hardwear Trango 3.1 tent with our Slumberjack Big Timber 0° sleeping bags zipped together over a pair of joined Therm-a-Rest XL Dreamtime self-inflating mattresses.

We slept like the dead, not rising until the sun was beating unmercifully through the walls of the tent. Bill and I had found a convenient tree nearby for a bladder station and after getting that out of the way, we washed up and I grabbed a cup of the freshly brewed coffee Susan had prepared.

"We must use up those things from the refrigerator that will spoil unless we can find more ice. Omelets ok?"

Helen was busy digging out the pans and the Coghlan's toaster. Susan and she said it would be a while before breakfast was ready so Bill and I dug out our firearms and moved them to our tents. Bill and Susan had the same tent and mattress pads as we did but supposedly different sleeping bags. He called them sleep systems with layered bags. Yeah, right, they were Slumberjack bags identical to ours. We both pulled out 5 round magazines for our Springfield's loaded with soft point hunting ammo.

Big game hunting season was closed. Nevertheless, there was big game here and there, generally well within easy shooting distance. We visited about the possibility of taking a deer. The most predominant species was the mule deer. There were also white tailed deer and elk. Javelina didn't generally inhabit Tonto and antelope were found further north. We might have to deal with a black bear although we were unlikely to find a buffalo. Neither would we run into bighorn sheep but a turkey was a slim possibility. Mountain lions were everywhere throughout Arizona and we'd have to maintain our guard. Small game would be limited to cottontail rabbits and tree rats.

As we reviewed the likely game, I vowed to load one 20 round magazine with soft pointed hunting ammo in case of a big cat or black bear. I had five hundred rounds of the soft point hunting ammo due to a mistake placing an online order. Concentrating on the bullet weight, I missed the fact that it was soft point. I chalked it up to having a lifetime supply of hunting ammo. It could be used for hunting man or beast.

Eventually, the omelets were ready and were served up with bacon and toast. While there were two 20 pound bags of potatoes, they were the large baking potatoes from Costco and would have required extensive labor to produce hash browns. During breakfast, Helen mentioned the menu for the day. Tuna sandwiches for lunch and sirloin steaks with baked potatoes and lettuce salads for supper.

After breakfast cleanup, Bill and I were guided through unloading the pickups and trailers, taking care of the needed items. Helen rather insisted that we set up the screened dining enclosure and move the tables and chairs inside. That included not only the dining table but the tables holding the stoves plus the attendant propane bottles. Ours was a Wendover 13'x10'x8'8"h screen tent that we'd purchased online from the Camping Tents Store.

The menu would finish the fresh lettuce and meat in the cooler. The situation represented another missed opportunity for us. We'd discussed getting an electric powered cooler with a solar panel, battery and charge controller. We'd dismissed the idea because most fresh food has a limited storage life. It would have let us bring quite a bit of things like butter and cheese, however.

We had been looking at the Engel 12vdc Refrigerator/Freezer. Their largest held 84 quarts. It was a variable temperature unit and was either a refrigerator or a freezer. To have both would have required two units. It was cost prohibitive at \$1,442 per unit plus shipping. That didn't include two solar panels, charge controllers and two batteries. The units could be used on 110vac and would automatically switch to 12vdc when power was lost. By the way, 84 quarts is 2.807 cubic feet.

With cases of Provident Pantry freeze dried meat available, we decided to wait on hunting until it became a necessary activity. Instead, we got out the chain saw, an axe and a splitting maul and proceeded to cut up a dead pine tree. Being the soft wood that it is, the tree was cut up by late afternoon and the usable branches cut to length. A ranger stopped by and verified we had the permit to cut firewood and once again we were admonished against open fires.

The tuna sandwiches didn't provide much fuel for the amount of work we were doing and we didn't get all of the trunk sections cut up before we called it a day. Despite open fires being prohibited, we scraped a large area totally free of debris and pine needles. In the center of the area, we dug a hole about a foot deep and encircled it with rocks about a foot high. Inside the hole, we built a small fire with fuzz sticks in the center surrounded by a tepee of kindling surrounded by a pyramid of small branches. When we finished, we used a tarp to cover the prepared fire. We'd only light the fire in the case where we got snow.

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"We only brought the single bottle of salad dressing so your choices are limited to Thousand Island or Thousand Island. We set up the charcoal grill for the steaks and the baking potatoes are cooking in the stovetop oven. We'll bake bread tomorrow in the regular loaf pans I thought to stick in with the other cooking gear. Since we couldn't bring the large bread slicer, I brought that bread slicing frame."

"When do you want the coals started?"

"Give it 30 minutes. They need about 20 minutes to be ready, don't they?"

"Approximately, yes. I think we'll wash up and mix a drink. Do you ladies want a margarita?"

"Susan?"

"A Coke please."

"I'll have a Coke too. You guys go ahead and have a highball."

"Bill, how do you take your Jack?"

"Water."

"I prefer Squirt. There may be just enough ice left in the cooler to chill two drinks."

"Go ahead. I'll get the radio so we can keep up on current events."

...died at 3:30 pm eastern having remained unconscious since the surgery to remove the metal fragment. President Biden declared tomorrow as a National Day of Mourning. The state funeral has been scheduled for three days hence to allow foreign dignitaries who may wish to attend adequate travel time.

First Lady Michelle Obama, who was at Bethesda monitoring the President's condition, collapsed upon receiving news of his death and was admitted to the hospital. The first children maintaining a vigil at the White House have been informed of their father's death. Aides declined comment on either the First Lady's condition or the children's reactions.

At this point in time, approximately forty nations have indicated they will be represented. The first country to indicate they would be attending was Kenya. All the members of the European Union will be represented as will India and Pakistan. Prime Minister Putin will represent Russia. We are awaiting word from China, South Korea, Japan and Australia.

Reactions from around the country are varied with most expressing sorrow. The Reverend Jesse Jackson and Reverend Al Sharpton had strong words about the assassination. Charles Rangel and Maxine Waters were noticeably silent.

We will return after a word from our...

“Great. This is just great. The first black President is assassinated during his first term in office. Bill, we could just have those race riots.”

“We already have them. It’s simply a matter of degree. There isn’t much left to burn down, fortunately. Off hand, I think we may have gotten out of Dodge just in time. I’m sure that once the news spreads, it will fuel the fires, no pun intended, of those rioting. The country certainly didn’t need this right at the midpoint of his first term in office. I can’t think of a single thing that he did that I agreed with but that’s beside the point. It has more to do with respecting the office than the particular office holder.”

“I can hear it now.”

“Hear what?”

“Not what, who. TOM is sitting at his desk reading his computer screen and muttering ‘Lock and Load’.”

“He could finally be right, for a change.”

“Oh I don’t know, he passed along quite a bit of information. He had nothing but time on his hands and a knack for doing research. He was probably right more often than he was wrong. Except for the M2HB. Eventually, he was right about that too, about four years after the fact.”

“He’s an interesting person. He was in the Air Force during the early 1960s. That would put him in his late 60s or early 70s. He lists his NRA memberships on Frugal’s. I wonder what he thinks of Biden’s orders.”

“It would be pure speculation. My guess is that he’s never seen a firearm law that he liked. Like the Clanton’s and McLauray’s in Tombstone. It seems clear from his stories and comments that he opposes all firearm laws.”

“If that’s the case, why does he live in California?”

“Maybe they can’t afford to move.”

“Did you ever shoot one?”

“One what?”

“An M2HB.”

“Once; during a familiarization course.”

“I never had the chance.”

“The one I fired was vehicle mounted on the then new HMMWV. The HMMWV was first used in combat in Panama after I got out.”

“That shooting we were involved in the other day was the first time I was involved in what could be called combat. I wanted to puke my guts up and had to swallow hard several times to keep the bile down. You saw combat in Grenada, right?”

“Urgent Fury. It was screwed up from the beginning. To paraphrase a report I read, the loss of the inertial navigation system in the lead C-130 aircraft meant that the flow of C-130s had to be adjusted in the air and delayed our parachute assault at Point Salines. Delay of the airdrop until daylight put it thirty-six minutes behind the Marine assault at Pearls and cost us and other Joint Special Operations Command (JSOC) forces tactical surprise. Adjusting the airflow changed the order of the C-130 airdrop which mixed our units on the landing zone. The delay of the airdrop and confusion resulting from the unplanned sequence of the airdrop was a major operational slip-up. After overcoming stiff Cuban resistance at the airport and rescuing students at the True Blue campus, we learned of other American students at the Grand Anse campus south of St. George’s and radioed for reinforcements. Meanwhile, having lost the cover of darkness as they entered St. George’s, Navy SEALs found themselves trapped and outgunned as they tried to rescue the Governor-General. Schwarzkopf was there serving as an advisor to Vice Admiral Metcalf and was second in command.

“We were reinforced by two battalions of the 82nd Airborne. It was totally screwed from start to finish. That’s when I decided to get out when my enlistment was up. Before you ask, yes, I fired my weapon and possibly wounded some Cuban troops. We had two Battalions of Rangers spread out from hell and gone with units intermingled and so forth. Did I see Cubans go down? Hell yes. I’m not certain if it was my fire or that of another Ranger. You knew about the friendly fire incidents didn’t you?”

“No, what happened?”

“A ‘Naval Aviator’ bombed the 82nd Airborne. A bunch were wounded, three seriously. Another ‘Naval Aviator’ bombed a mental hospital. Every time I read about that operation, the body count shrinks. Like I said, it was FUBAR. It’s not something that I really like to talk about. Others who were there probably see it entirely differently. I think I’ll turn in. No telling what tomorrow might bring.”

“Yeah. I think Susan and I will turn in too.”

“You seem to be upset.”

“I was recounting Grenada to Bill.”

“Yes, that always upsets you. At least you don’t have the nightmares anymore.”

“It’s probably just PTSD. I haven’t had the dreams in a long time.”

“I was worried the day Bill and you shot those two guys.”

“In a way, that was different. The first guy was going to firebomb our house. That second guy was shooting at us and could have easily fired through one of the shutters. It was very personal that time.”

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“We’re going to start the bread. Why don’t the two of you have one of those Mountain House breakfast egg things?”

“Ham or bacon?”

“I’ll take bacon.”

“Just to keep it even, I’ll take ham. Turn on the radio and let’s find out what’s happening.”

...several trailer parks occupied by snowbirds. Some of the parks have been totally destroyed. In others, the residents produced firearms and shot anyone who had the gas bombs. Governor Brewer has ordered that gasoline only be dispensed into motor vehicle fuel tanks with a limit of ten gallons per purchase.

In southern Arizona, troops have crossed the border and there is dispute whether they are Mexican soldiers or members of drug cartels. The first crossing came from Nogales and advanced north to Rio Rico before stalling when National Guard troops were sent south from Tucson. The second crossing occurred at Douglas north of Agua Prieta. That much larger force split into two forces of roughly equal numbers and are headed to Bisbee and McNeil. Elements of the 82nd Airborne All American Division were already on alert as they constitute the Rapid Deployment Force and arrived on scene in something over four hours after the border penetration. The RDF has a standing policy to depart on 18 hours’ notice and to be anywhere in the world they’re required within 96 hours. President Biden declined to permit embedded reporters in the operations of the 82nd in southern Arizona.

“I don’t see why not, it’s the Sonoran Desert and Geraldo would have plenty of sand to draw maps in.”

“This isn’t getting that wood split. If we can finish by lunch, there’s another deadfall close by. We can at least get it cut up by supper time. You ready George?”

“After I finish my coffee.”

It almost seemed like the next thing we'd hear on the news was that Russia had parachuted troops into a small Colorado town. The problem I had with *Red Dawn* was the fact that the transport aircraft would have been picked up by radar and fighters scrambled to intercept the large body of aircraft. Between the two versions of the film, I preferred the first.

Sometime during the morning the Ranger stopped by again to make sure we had a firewood cutting permit. Apparently our covered fire pit escaped his notice. It was posted in the required location on the driver's side window of my pickup. Susan and Helen inquired about where his Ranger Station was located and determined that our location wasn't within his sight even if he was in a fire tower.

Bill started cutting up the second deadfall and I continued to split the logs. We finished up just in time for lunch. We broke for an hour and he began cutting up the limbs. By then, my shoulders were screaming and I had Helen add a coating of Icy Hot and had a warm Coke before returning to my splitting chores. They had limited the bread to four 16 ounce loaves. Bill soon finished using the chainsaw and began hauling and stacking the cut up branches. I finally gave in and asked him to split a few of the logs.

That night, we were served home canned beef stew and fresh bread, using up the last of the fresh butter, preceded by another highball. We definitely needed some ice. We discussed that after supper while the Ladies listened to an oldies station. Bill agreed to split the wood while I refilled our empty fuel cans and bought some blocks of ice the next day. On the way up, Susan had spotted the small general store with two gas pumps, apparently gas and diesel. We refilled both pickups and I loaded the empty cans in the back of my now empty pickup bed. The store was about 20 miles back.

"Do you sell block ice?"

"Yep, got a cooler?"

"I'll get it."

"How big is it?"

"It's an igloo 250 quart Great White."

"Leave it sit and we'll haul the ice. There's no way we could move it after it's filled. Camping up here, are you?"

"We're mainly harvesting firewood. Say, any chance of refilling some five gallon cans?"

"Gas or diesel?"

"Both."

“Those we can haul. Drag them to the pumps and start pumping. I’d help but I have a bad back.”

“I have to add the fuel stabilizers first.”

“Stabil?”

“PRI products.”

“Heard about them, any good?”

“You bet. They even restore sour gas and old diesel.”

“Three cans each? I’ll set the machine to distribute 15 gallons of each. So anyway, what’s your take on the goings on around the country?”

“It’s not good. Troops crossed the border at Nogales and Agua Prieta. Arizona National Guard is handling the Nogales crossing and the 82nd Airborne Rapid Deployment Force parachuted in near Bisbee and McNeil.”

“You don’t say. Ok, the fuel is \$4 a gallon times 30 gallons or a hundred twenty bucks. The ice is \$3 per block. Fifteen times three is forty-five bucks. Need an ice pick?”

“Well...”

“It’s no charge for a purchase of more than 10 blocks.”

“So, one sixty-five?”

“Yep.”

“Are you aware of the Governor’s embargo on gasoline sales?”

“Yeah, yeah, yeah. Ten gallons per purchase and only dispensed into a motor vehicle. I’m about out of fuel and I’ll be shutting up shop soon. Might make sense in Phoenix but the nearest gas station to the north might be beyond the range of ten gallons and it’s about the same the other way.”

“We topped off at a station that said ‘last chance gas’.”

“Is he pulling that again? You can make it all the way from Phoenix to Payson if you start out with a full tank.”

“You carry any food?”

“It would be a damned sorry excuse for a general store if I didn’t.”

I didn’t get much, bacon, eggs, sausage, butter and four cans of Folgers. He had Bigelow tea and I got two boxes of Earl Grey and two boxes of Darjeeling. We had Lipton in our supplies. We now had full tanks, 110 gallons of fuel for each vehicle and 7½ gallons of gasoline for the chainsaw with the cans I took out of the shed. Before we went to desert landscaping our lawn was Bermuda grass which took far too much water to keep green. Need a lawnmower?

When I returned, Bill was standing there with his shirt off allowing Susan to apply Icy Hot. He had made a good dent in splitting the logs. We chipped some ice from the blocks to make room for the bacon, eggs, sausage and butter. The eggs were in those large trays. The other things were generally packaged flat and took minimal room. Full like this with block ice, it should remain cold for about two weeks. The blocks didn’t quite fill the cooler, leaving an empty area on one side. The chips were pushed down into that gap leaving a fair sized area. The key now was to open the cooler as little as possible.

Lunch would consist of fried Spam and fried potatoes. Our wives had selected the three largest potatoes, scrubbed and sliced them. They were in a pan of water to wash the extra starch free. The bread was in the pans rising for the second time before being baked. I told Bill that I’d spell him for a while to let his shoulders rest. He said not to worry about it; he’d dug out his splitting wedge. I wasn’t sure what he was referring to so he showed me. He explained that it was a 4 way wedge from a hydraulic splitter. To use it, you centered it on the log and gave it a mighty whack with a heavy maul. It might take two or three whacks to split the wood but it sure beat the splitting maul. Once split, the four quarters could be further split with the wedge, splitting maul or axe. After a demonstration, I started to split the logs with the wedge and he further split them with the axe.

We were interrupted with lunch and resumed splitting chores after. We were nearly finished when Susan announced that supper was ready. Shortly after we finished with supper, it started to snow.

Bill lit the fire in the fire hole and I carried over an armload of split wood. We both went for a second load and put the tarp over the carefully stacked firewood. We kept the fire small for two reasons, the Ranger and to eliminate most of the sparks. It wasn’t particularly obvious due to the small size. It did put out a good amount of heat. There was coffee and hot water for tea so I brewed a cup of Darjeeling. Helen had a cup of Earl Grey and the Collins’ drank coffee.

It snowed off and on most of the next day and by late evening we had a six inch accumulation. We had managed to split the last of the firewood and add it to the pile. With the snow came the cold which, in turn, would extend the life of the ice in the cooler. Rather than coffee, Susan heated hot water and we broke out the Swiss Miss. With over 540 envelopes of the hot chocolate we made double servings (12 ounces).

We listened briefly to the news with most of it relating to the cross border incursion. The 82nd had made short work of the invaders near McNeil and Bisbee. Half their force was moved to the other crossing and they had halted the advance of the opposing force. With the airborne unit maintaining the status quo, a swap of the Arizona National Guard units with the remaining airborne troops near Bisbee began in earnest using UH-60 Blackhawks.

The fire was slightly larger than before the snow and welcome. A quick check showed the roads to be impassible, allowing us to add an extra log to the fire. Bill dug through their trailer and brought out a used military tent and a tent stove. It took the four of us the better part of an hour to get it erected, the stove installed and a fire going. We then moved the contents of the screen tent to the heated dining tent. The ice chest was left sitting in the snow.

It remained cloudy throughout the day with occasional snow flurries. The Ladies prepared sausage gravy and biscuits for breakfast suggesting that we could all use something that would 'stick'. A can of Mountain House beef stew was set out for lunch and Lasagna w/Meat Sauce for supper.

An easy listening station was found that gave news updates on the hour and half hour. The news this day was an improvement; the former First Lady had been released from the hospital having undergone tests to eliminate a stroke and heart attack. The final verdict was stress. Little wonder, she'd undergone days of not knowing the final outcome and the back and forth condition reports put out by overly optimistic doctors and the White House Press Secretary. A spokesman indicated that she would be returning to Kenwood, Chicago, Illinois.

Showing real strength of character, she made an impassioned plea for order to be restored. A media pundit opined that there would be little hope for order being restored until after the funeral service at the National Cathedral and burial at Arlington National Cemetery. Nonetheless the violent activity was lessening as rioters ran out of places to target and local, state and federal authorities maintained their hard stance.

"You know, for a nation on the verge of total financial meltdown, this couldn't have happened at a worse time. I don't mean to suggest that there's ever a good time for a President to be assassinated...but where is the money going to come from to rebuild the nation?"

"I can't answer that partner; I've been wondering the same myself. I really shouldn't have spoken about Grenada last night. I had nightmares for a long time over that adventure. We think it was PTSD. Being the thickheaded individual I am, I never sought out treatment and put Helen through hell for a couple or three years. I think the light at the end of the tunnel came when you got us involved in the gun culture and later in preparedness. Never say never but I can't envision us ever as unprepared as we were in the beginning."

“Like I said, I never saw combat. I did my time and got out. Shooting at targets, even silhouettes, just isn’t the same. Part of it has to be that targets don’t shoot back or shoot first. To quote Bear Claw in Jeremiah Johnson, *you’ve come far pilgrim.*”

“*Feels like far.*”

“*Were it worth the trouble?*”

“*What trouble?*”

“Grenada, the PTSD, joining the gun culture, becoming a prepper plus this little mess the country finds itself in.”

“Up to that last point, I have no regrets. Can’t say I’m exactly sure how this is going to work out. There are crazy people running around looting, firebombing, shooting, a border incursion and who knows what else.”

“When he got elected, I half wondered how long it would be before someone took a shot at him. Being the first anything has a downside. The black population of the country is what ten, twelve percent? One of these days we’ll elect a female President and have to worry about her having Midol days.”

“Your red neck is showing, you chauvinist pig. I looked it up. The population of these here United States is about white 75%, black 12.5%, some other race 5%, Asian 4.5%, two or more races 2.5%, Native American 1% and Hawaiian or Pacific Islander 0.15%. Those numbers are rounded. Hispanic or Latinos are included in those numbers and account for about 16% of the population. If you remove Hispanics or Latinos from the whites, the percentage drops to sixty-four. Females outnumber males by about 4 million.”

“I knew that about the females.”

“I really hope that we can avoid additional violence. If this turns into what it is capable of becoming, it will be worse than the events in that story Grand wrote, *Normal.*”

“Maybe; except we won’t find some old man with seven warehouses of goods that he’ll trade us for little or nothing.”

“Smoke; his name was Smoke.”

“That’s right. How did you remember that?”

“Photographic memory?”

“You finally bought some film?”

“Digital. I just changed the batteries. You know with this tent and stove, we should be downright comfortable up here in the mountains. Burning pine is going to coat the stovepipe with creosote.”

“Kirafu has expanded its line of Tipis. They go up to a 24 man unit. With stove, it runs about thirty-seven hundred.”

“Heavy?”

“Man packable. One person carries the stove, a second the tipi and the third everything that goes with it. Their website said they put 44 people in it sitting in chairs. Flaunt it as a great emergency shelter, never mind the lead time to get one is six plus weeks. This old tent is a heavy SOB because of the canvas construction. It’s part of our trailer supplies although we almost never use it.”

“Sure came in handy this time.”

“It’s one of the things we never unpack. Is there a stream nearby? We have more empty water jugs than full.”

“It’s about a quarter of a mile. Clear water but we filter it anyway.”

“You have to. Want to test out those game carts and our water filter?”

“Yep. It won’t get done if we don’t do it. I’ll get my filter.”

“You won’t need it. We have a Sawyer 4-liter complete water treatment system. We have their point zero two bucket and filter too. I’m not going dig it out because we don’t need it and it would take a lot longer. The treatment system puts out 4 liters or one gallon in three minutes. It should only take us an hour to fill all of the jugs.”

We took two carts. One had the empty jugs and the other the Sawyer system. Bill rigged it up, tossing a line over a branch and we used a pail to scoop water from the stream to the top/dirty water compartment. The water fed from it to the lower/clean water compartment. It was a bit more than an hour; we had twenty-four jugs to refill. We kept in touch with our wives with our portable CB radios.

We unloaded the bottles under the tables holding the stoves, put the equipment up and sat down for coffee. The radio was on, but turned down low. The other part of our American Express Cards, the weather radios with SAME, had been turned to a local coding and worn on our belts. And, wouldn’t you know it; we got the alert tone on our Oregon Scientific WR602s. It was a law enforcement warning applicable to Gila County only. Location specific, it pertained to Payson and a small group of Apaches running amok.

“Why not, everyone else is.”

“They said a small group. Why would they put out a SAME notice for a small group?”

“One man’s small group is another man’s herd. What say we get our rifles out and make sure they’re clean? Our wives can clean their own.”

“Clean our own what?”

“Rifles.”

“There isn’t room for all four of us to work at the table at the same time cleaning rifles.”

“Fine. We’ll go first and you can do yours after we finish.”

“We’ll be cooking lunch.”

“Bill, it’s not worth the argument. Bring all of your rifles and shotguns and I’ll get mine. Do you have everything you need?”

“I have CLP, gun oil, Hoppe’s, lithium grease, graphite and my cleaning kit. Yeah, I think I have it covered.”

“Lithium huh? I use silicone.”

“They have many common attributes.”

It took two trips to bring the firearms and two to return them to our tents. Funny thing, we had just returned to the mess tent after replacing the last of the cleaned firearms back in our tents when lunch was served.

“You timed it that way on purpose.”

“Of course we did. You do a much better job cleaning and lubricating the firearms.”

“You still have to do your pistols and there is ample room for us all to do that at the same time.”

“Did you clean the ‘Cowboy guns’?”

“Oops.”

“You two have enough of those to go around, don’t you?”

“And then some. Since Winchester went out of business, we’ve stopped shooting those rifles and carbines. We have enough Marlins and Vaqueros to outfit everyone if the gun belts fit.”

“How much did the Paladin rig run?”

“Seven twenty-five.”

“The Crossdraw rigs?”

“Four seventy-five. We went with plain leather with Conchos. If you buy the hand tooled version with Conchos, it runs seven forty.”

“Do you have scabbards for the rifles?”

“You bet. Unfortunately we don’t have horses and have never ridden a horse.”

“What did they run?”

“Around one forty and we bought four so five sixty altogether.”

“You have three grand tied up in gun leather?”

“I never added it up. That sounds about right.”

“But you could learn to ride?”

“I’m not so sure about that. A horse is a large, powerful animal. I’ve read that they can sense fear in a rider and respond accordingly.”

“Where did you read that?”

“Remember Salina and TOM’s tale about the horse and his experience?”

“I do remember reading that. At least he could make fun of himself. We only get out to a stable once or twice a year to ride. It’s far cheaper to rent a horse for a couple of hours than own one. We go once in the spring and once in the fall when the temperatures are reasonable.”

Arizona may not be the Wild West although it was the last of the lower 48 to be admitted to the union. A significant portion of the state was devoted to Reservations for various Indian/Native American tribal groups. Much of the state is desert with mountain areas containing vast forests. We are bordered on the south by the Sonoran Desert and in the northwest by the Grand Canyon. Our northern border was Utah’s southern border and the northeast corner of the state was one of the four corners made up of Arizona, New Mexico, Utah and Colorado.

“Bill, can you tell me why I feel like I’m on trial here?”

“On trial? Oh. We’re all on trial in a manner of speaking. The United States of America is the home of the brave, the land of the free; the world’s melting pot and the most powerful nation on the planet. We’re on trial to see if we put our money where our mouth is. It’s like Animal Farm where some are more equal than others. It’s certainly not the first time a President has been assassinated. However, we elected our first black President and he’s assassinated halfway through his first term.

“The nation was founded on the principle that all people are created equal. It took Amendments to the Constitution to make sure that was very clear. Women didn’t get the vote when they wrote the Constitution and it was a long time coming, 1920. We passed a Civil Rights Act in 1866 and again 98 years later and neither eliminated discrimination. In total, there are 8 federal Civil Rights Acts and one passed by the state of California. Wiki said only one of those Acts had been ruled unconstitutional. You aren’t the only person who gets curious about something and looks it up on Wiki. Someone once said that you cannot legislate morality.”

“I read that somewhere. You don’t suppose we’re referring to the same thing, do you?”

“As in something TOM wrote?”

“I bet you’re right. Whoever said it is wrong. You can legislate morality. What you can’t do is change people. Each of us is an individual who makes his/her own choices. One of those choices could be whether or not to conform to the legislated morality. That’s like saying you can’t commit murder. Murders happen every day. Murder is an immoral act and that doesn’t seem to slow people down. Killing another human being may or may not be murder, depending on whether or not the killing is justified by the circumstances as in the case of war or self-defense.”

“Let’s go cut up another tree and burn off some of this energy. Maybe we can get lucky and find some hardwood. What grows here besides evergreens?”

“Arizona ash, among others, especially in this area. That’s a hardwood.”

“Let’s go find a standing or fallen Arizona ash tree. We can come back for the saw and axe. Probably should take our rifles loaded with hunting ammo.”

“We can sling our rifles. I’ll carry the axe and gas can. Don’t be a wimp.”

“Better yet, let’s take two game carts; we might actually trip over an elk or deer.”

“Yeah, or a bear or mountain lion.”

About a klick from the camp we found a standing dead ash tree. We dropped it and trimmed the limbs from the trunk. The limbs were cut into pieces for the stove and loaded on the two game carts. We hauled the wood back to the camp and stacked it inside the mess tent next to the stove. We then put the one game cart, the chainsaw and axe

in the back of my pickup and returned to the scene of the fallen tree. We could only get within 150 meters and parked and returned with our equipment. While Bill cut up the tree, I hauled the remaining cut up branches to the pickup with the game cart. By the time I'd finished, Bill was done and we hauled the trunk sections to the pickup one at a time. The pickup was filled to the top of the sideboards by the time we had the firewood loaded.

"That should burn hot and clear out any creosote."

"It could just set it on fire."

"Ok, we'll let the fire die out and I'll pull the pipe and run my chimney brush through it. Then we can start a good fire and burn out any residue."

"You have the right size for your stovepipe?"

"They come in sizes from 5" up to 12". This pipe is 5" and yes, I have the brush with me plus some Anti-Creo-Soot solution to dissolve any creosote buildup."

"It dissolves creosote?"

"You're supposed to burn it in your stove or fireplace and it breaks the glazing of the creosote. Sometimes, in a pinch, I put some in a pan and dip the steel brush in it and just keep running it through until the pipe is clean. I do it the proper way for our fireplace. When I run the 10" brush for it, I use the recommended method on pushing the brush down from the top with the fireplace doors closed. It's a simple matter to open the doors and use my shop vacuum to clean up the stuff the brush knocks down."

"This I have to see."

"There, what do you think?"

"I think it's as clean as you're going to get it."

"Let's get the pipe back in place and get a fire going."

"George, what does the military acronym MOUT stand for?"

"Military Operations in Urban Terrain. Why, what's up?"

"How big is a Brigade?"

"A Brigade or a Brigade Combat Team?"

"The Combat Team."

“Light or Heavy?”

“Light.”

“Ok, Infantry. About 4,000 personnel. It includes two or more battalions and several different support units these days. MOUT? Brigade Combat Team? Did you hear something on the radio?”

“Yes. While the two of you were cleaning the stovepipe, we were listening to a news broadcast. It’s a shame we don’t have a TV. Anyway, an Army Division is being assigned to cover four states and its Brigade Combat Teams are assigned to the major cities. They’re moving through individual cities with fixed bayonets conducting MOUT operations. Anyone who opposes them with a firearm is shot. It sounds a lot like what we did in Iraq. What is a Heavy Brigade Combat Team?”

“It’s armor with Abrams and Bradleys. Assuming we have elections in 2012, what’s your forecast Bill?”

“The GOP will sweep the House, Senate and White House. That’s assuming we have elections.”

“Bill, why wouldn’t we have elections?”

“Susan, we are under what amounts to an all-out insurrection. I don’t doubt that our military can clean out the cities a few at a time. However, they aren’t going to catch the smart ones, the organizers. And, those organizers will have so much propaganda to use against the government, the government could fall. Then what? UN peacekeeping troops being funneled in to restore and maintain order? If and when that happens all of the people currently not out raising hell will be. Do you agree with me George?”

“Unfortunately yes. It will be like that old Patriot Fiction story Pax Americana. I’ll be on the front lines if that happens.”

“We have one thing in our favor.”

“And, that is?”

“Thousands of rounds of ammunition, sniper rifles and large quantities of ordnance. Do you know where Camp Navajo is?”

“Isn’t that outside of Flagstaff?”

“That’s right, a few miles to the west. That’s the Regional ammo supply point for the Arizona Nation Guard.”

“And, you want to go shopping?”

“Yes and the sooner the better.”

The Trials of George Thomas – Six

Midnight Requisitions:

“What are you two talking about?”

“Acquiring the things we don’t have or more of the things we do have that are pretty much military only.”

“Raufoss?”

“That falls in the more category; M1022 which is a matching antipersonnel round falls into don’t have category along with hand grenades, demolitions and the universal favorite, the LAW rocket or M136 AT4CS if the LAW isn’t available. What do you think George, some 40mm stuff too?”

“If we can get M203s and decent rifles to mount them on.”

“And if we can’t?”

“Either M-79s or H&K M-320s mounted on HK-417s and HK-416s. That failing, the HK69A1, their version of the M-79. If we find four each of the HK carbines in each caliber, we should get them.”

“What are you talking about?”

“One thing at a time. You both know what the Raufoss is. The M1022 is a conventional round with ballistics matching the Raufoss. If you’re sighted in for one, you’re sighted in for both. I doubt I need to explain hand grenades but there are several types. Offensive grenades are a concussion grenade that produces a large explosion with few fragments while defensive hand grenades are referred to as fragmentation grenades and produce plenty of fragments. There are two kinds of incendiary grenade, Thermate and White Phosphorus. And, you’re both familiar with our smoke grenades that are military spec.

“The LAW, or Light Anti-tank Weapon, rocket is a 66mm expandable rocket dating back to Vietnam but reintroduced in Iraq. In between, the Army fielded the M136 AT4 84mm rocket. The HK-416 is a 5.56mm select fire rifle and the HK-417 is the same in the 7.62x51mm. Both use a piston operating system which overcomes the problem with the M16 and M4.”

“Don’t forget night vision.”

“We’d better make a list.”

“Are your acquisitions going to include the two of us?”

“You both want a piece of this?”

“My vow was for richer or poorer, in sickness and health, until death do us part. You bet your sweet bippy I want in!”

“Susan?”

“In for a penny, in for a pound. They’re damned sure going to try and collect all the NFA items. And we’re sure not short on those.”

“George, Camp Navajo is a big place.”

“True. They do store the munitions for the Arizona National Guard and have an EOD Company and a Sapper Company which means they have demolitions.”

“They also have an MP Company.”

“That just means that were going to have to be awfully sneaky.”

“How do you want to do this?”

“Helen and Susan can stay here while we do a recon. With all the activity in Phoenix and Tucson, they’re probably resupplying on a daily basis. Figure two days to do the recon and check out their perimeter security. Then a day or so to plan it out and go from there. Did you bring your spotting scope?”

“Yes, it’s in a box with the cleaning supplies and repair parts.”

“There’s no sense in rushing into this. One day more or less shouldn’t make a difference. I’d like to sleep on it and finish up splitting the hardwood. I’ve never been to Camp Navajo, have you?”

“Not really. I drove by it once when I was traveling from Flagstaff to Kingman. That was a few years back before they moved most of the ammo to Hawthorne up in Nevada. Guard took it over after that. I think it was ’92 or ’93. The ANG stores all kinds of things for other government agencies and the Camp has been upgraded almost continually since they took it over. Security will be tight because of some of the things they store.”

“What kinds of things?”

“Trident I and Minuteman II missiles. According to Global Security, the inventory stored on contracts is worth about \$7 billion dollars.”

“Yeah, we definitely need to think this through.”

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Think it through we did. I had difficulty getting to sleep contemplating what we had discussed. The next day, while we were splitting the hardwood, Bill commented, "Short night."

"Yeah, I had trouble getting to sleep. I'm still convinced this is what we should do despite the downsides."

"And, they would be?"

"Breaking and entering a military facility. Stealing federal property, especially some of the things we discussed last night. Once we start, there will be no turning back. They may never determine who we are; or, we could get caught in the act."

"I'm more concerned about some of the details. There are over 700 igloos there. Which igloos hold what we want? Are the igloos locked and if so by what means? Even if it is just military grade padlocks, they have case hardened hasps and brass bodies and are extremely difficult to get around. How do we get what we want and get it back here? Is this going to be our staging area or are we going to use a different location?"

"I'll take a shot at that last question. I think we're going to have to go back to Phoenix and operate out of our homes. Will our employers resume operations? If so, do we return to work? I noticed that that trailer I bought has a trailer hitch ball on the back and we could probably pull both trailers with my old worn out pickup or your old worn out pickup."

"Around a thousand cubic feet of munitions and explosives? We're talking really heavy stuff and I'm inclined to think that weight and not volume will be the limiting factor. Still, it should be enough to last us for a long time. You know Boeing will reopen as fast as humanly possible and so will the state. Are Helen and you in the financial position to quit your jobs? Susan and I are. Our home is paid for and we have enough set aside to last us for years."

"Our home is paid for too. We have quite a bit set aside. I think we could go for three years without any additional income other than what we get from our investments. Our annuity doesn't start paying out until I'm 65. We do have those precious metals but Biden could issue a recall of all precious metals."

"We'll figure out something. If there is a rebellion like we discussed, it shouldn't last very long."

"I wouldn't be so sure of that."

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We finished splitting and stacking the hardwood. Our wives fed us as special of a supper as it's possible to make from freeze dried food. We packed our backpacks for a 10-day stay at Camp Navajo and made it clear to Helen and Susan that we would take as long as it took to get what we wanted. After supper, we finished unloading the trailers and hitched Bill's to mine. For some reason, I was a little more comfortable with the idea that the trailer that I bought wasn't hot. Someone had done a bit of work installing the extra tow hitch.

After much consideration and some discussion, we decided to take our best M1A rifles and the Mossberg shotguns recognizing that should we be forced to use the weapons, our plan would be blown out of the water. We left after lunch the following day, hoping to reach Flagstaff during the late afternoon and be in position before dark, going through Show Low to Holbrook and west on I-40. Said position wouldn't be in view of Camp Navajo.

We had good luck traveling and were able to find enough service stations to keep the pickup's tank topped off, ten gallons at a time. Passing through Flagstaff, we noted that National Guard soldiers had all of the exits off I-40 blocked. This raised a question; were the Guard troops housed locally or out at Camp Navajo? On the west side there was an encampment which answered that question for us.

We exited at exit 191 and headed south on the local roads. We skirted Rogers Lake to the south and moved to about what we took to the midpoint of the southern boundary of the camp. We moved our miniature B train off the road, with some difficulty and got the pickup pointed in the right direction for a fast E&E. After setting up camp, we used the camp stove to heat water for our meal and perk a pot of coffee.

As the sun began to set, we moved north, almost to the boundary of the Camp. It was fenced and there were periodic patrols working on what appeared to be an irregular schedule. Bill napped until 1 am and then took over for me. We were using a mini Mag-lite with a red lens filter when we had to make a note. We set in for a long stay taking 5 hour shifts. For two nights and two days, we did nothing but observe by naked eye and using the spotting scope.

"There's a section of fence there that is always in shadow that they can't really see from the Hummer. We can probably cut through there George."

"I noticed that. How many igloos have we identified as to content?"

"First, we had to locate the igloos. I did that and we might want to move. I marked them down as to what they appear to contain. This one here contains belted .50BMG. This one here, belted 7.62 and this one over here belted ammo for the SAWs. This one here contains LAW rockets; I saw them moving them by the crate. This one I marked here seems to contain the grenades as does the one next to it. I think this one here contains the Raufoss or the M1022, I can't be sure. This separate igloo has demolitions. See how it is set a bit apart from the others?"

“Do you want to go in tonight?”

“We can at least do a closer recon and learn what kinds of locks we’re dealing with. They patrol the igloos too.”

“Yeah, I noticed. Are we being brave or just plain foolish?”

“Yep.”

We needed night vision equipment too. Perhaps a few AN/PVS-14 Monocular Night Vision Devices and a few AN/PVS-22 and AN/PVS-27 night vision scopes. We relocated and cut through the fence, ducking down when we saw the headlights. We were through the fence after the second pass and moving towards the igloos. There had been a tremendous amount of traffic in and around the igloos over the previous 48 hours with most of it occurring during the daytime.

The first shock came when we discovered that the igloos were unlocked. That made sense, considering the volume of traffic. They could be locked but simply weren’t. That simplified our problem and we began verifying the contents of the ones we’d discussed. Everything was pretty much as we thought it to be. We opened a crate of LAW rockets and pulled out two 5-round containers and headed back for the fence. They were placed in my trailer and we returned for more containers of the rockets, returning with two more. As the first rays of the early morning sun broke in the east, we were back in our camp, having moved the contents of four crates, 60 rockets.

“Tonight we do the hand grenades.”

“Ok. Let’s get some sleep, I’m bushed.”

The night and the one that followed resulted in us getting large quantities of M67 Fragmentation, M18 Colored Smoke, AN-M83 TA Smoke, AN-M14 TH3 Incendiary, M15 Smoke/Incendiary and ABC-M7A2, ABC-M7A3 CS Riot Control grenades, maybe 250 of each. The next night, we located the Mk 211MP and the M1022 and made as many trips as we could before sunrise. Seven trips resulted in our moving seven cans of each. We decided to spend the coming night gathering another 7 cans of each. We had been gone a week.

“We still don’t have the rifles, 40mm grenades, grenade launchers, night vision or any demolitions.”

“We’d better get everything we want from the igloos first. I suspect we’ll only get a single chance at the rifles and night vision. They’re likely not stored in bunkers but in an armory or a warehouse.”

“Yeah, huh? I hadn’t thought that through. Four sets of the monocular, helmets, four rifles and four ACOGs. I’m of a mind to just buy the MUNS (AN/PVS-27, \$10,700 each).”

“They’re pretty pricey.”

“That why we have all those gold coins. They have to be worth five times what we paid for them. All things considered, we’d be getting the MUNS cheap. We’ll need four UNS for the regular rifles and two MUNS for our Tac-50s.”

“Ok. Tonight we finish the Mk 211 and the M1022. Tomorrow night we’ll do the 40mm grenades and some of the demolitions. Maybe some M118LR and M855A1. The following night, we’ll finish getting the demolitions and get the weapons, night vision and helmets.”

“And Bugout the next morning?”

“I think so. I wouldn’t mind getting some Interceptor body armor. We’ll take it all to our house and store it in the shelter and then head back to Tonto.”

“It’s a shame we can’t call our wives and bring them up to date.”

“I told Susan that it could run as long as 10 days if we were successful in getting what we were looking for and not to get upset until we’d been gone 12 days. I’m sure she explained that to Helen.”

“I hope so. This is about as long as we’ve been apart since we married.”

“Another thing to think about is getting some of the ACU uniforms. We can get them from Propper. They have the ACU, ABU, cop clothing and that new MultiCam. Having all four available to us should confuse the bejesus out of our adversary. We already have the BDUs and that would give us five different uniforms.”

“Cop clothing? What about badges and ID?”

“We can get some rent-a-cop badges and create some kind of ID on our computers. Get it laminated and no one should know the difference. We aren’t going to be dealing with these people face to face. Should that happen, they won’t be able to identify us; I don’t intend to let them.”

So much for being a couple of mild manner mechanics for Boeing Corporation assembling Apache helicopters. A lot more was changing than I ever envisioned when Helen called me to tell me the President had been shot. If things calmed down and an insurrection didn’t occur, so much the better. We would have to be very careful and avoid a fire at all cost. That guy out in California with all that gunpowder and such had only been discovered because of a fire.

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Tuesday, April 24, 2007

Norco resident Thomas Lee McKiernan regained his freedom Tuesday, but he's lost a lot in the last two months.

McKiernan, a retired machinist, Vietnam veteran and former Army captain, made national headlines in March when his home caught fire, exposing a cache of more than a hundred guns, a million rounds of ammunition and more than 185 pounds of gun powder.

When firefighters arrived at the scene, he tussled with them in an effort to get back into his burning home even as live rounds exploded in the blaze. When the flames were doused, Riverside County sheriff's officials discovered a 70-foot long tunnel beneath his house filled with food and water for long-term survival.

The fire, the water damage and the tunnel made his house uninhabitable.

McKiernan moved into the Robert Presley Detention Center, an unwitting emblem of embattled gun rights for some and a symbol of survivalist extremism for others.

But in the end, McKiernan was just a local man who accidentally ran afoul of the law, said Deputy District Attorney Michael Mayman.

On Tuesday, Riverside Superior Court Judge Janice M. McIntyre sentenced him to 80 days of time already served. He will also have to serve three years' probation, undergo psychiatric evaluation and forever give up his gun collection.

McKiernan faced as much as five years in prison, but the more lenient sentence was part of a plea arrangement that reflects his efforts to comply with the law and his lack of criminal history, said Mayman.

Most of McKiernan's guns were collected over decades, and they include collector's pieces such as pre-World War II guns. His illegal assault rifles were bought before they were outlawed in 2000, indicating that McKiernan was at least trying to be a law-abiding collector, Mayman said.

"People are particularly sensitive about this issue," said Mayman, who received dozens of calls from gun enthusiasts. "This was really more of an explosives case than a gun-rights issue."

The problem, said Mayman, is that McKiernan's stockpile of gunpowder was a threat to the community. He had more than 185 pounds of gunpowder – dozens of times the legal limit.

One positive outcome of the case is that many people are trying to learn from McKiernan's mistakes by making sure their gun collections are legal and that they have the proper permits if they store large quantities of gunpowder, Mayman said. "It's important for us to enforce our gun laws," Mayman said, adding that is particularly true in light of the Virginia Tech massacre.

On Tuesday morning, McKiernan waited for hours with dozens of other shackled inmates in the Riverside courthouse. Gray-haired and wearing an orange jumpsuit, the 62-year-old kept to himself and declined to make a statement to the court before his sentencing.

He's a quiet but pleasant man, explained his attorney, Michael K. Cernyar. Despite his jail time, he has fared well with support from family and neighbors in the community, Cernyar said.

Even though his neighbors had to be evacuated due to the explosives, many in the community came out in support of McKiernan, who lived in the now-condemned home for 32 years.

In the end, McKiernan got a fair deal, Cernyar concluded.

"I think it was fair, and I think gun lovers would think it was fair," he said. "People still have the right to bear arms."

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Say, there are some empty igloos at Camp Navajo; maybe he should store his stuff there. The authorities no doubt destroyed the 100 weapons, 185 pounds of gun powder and one million rounds of ammo. What a waste.

We finished up as planned. The four HK-416s and HK-417s all had the HK AG-C/EGLMs mounted together with the latest ACOG. While the rifles sported the flashhiders, there were optional muzzle compensators and sound suppressors. The sights proved to be the TA01NSN-DOC: 4x32 Trijicon ACOG with 7.0 MOA Docter Optic and those mounted on the HK 417s had the BDC for the M118LR 7.62x51mm ammo. That was about as good as we could hope to get. We detached the trailer from the pickup and unloaded the truck. It was too late to drive up to Tonto so Bill made a call. He dickered for a half hour, grinned and hung up.

"I made the deal on the four UNS and four MUNS. I'll pay for them and you can reimburse me. Apparently, the price of gold has risen in our absence. Twenty-four ounces at my original purchase price means they're hotter than a \$3 pistol after a gunfight. You ready to go?"

"Now?"

“Yeah. He said the gold would be the frosting on the cake for him and he’s going to boogie.”

“Where’s he going?”

“Sedona.”

“Right, up I-17 about 2 hours.”

“Give or take. He should make it well before sundown.”

“It’s going to be nice to get a hot shower and eat a decent meal. Let’s stop by our house and pull out two sirloins. We’ll have to get lettuce and baking potatoes, assuming we can.”

“We’ll stop on the way to Mel’s. Ten minutes won’t slow him down that much. The man has a lead foot.”

We had to settle for the largest potatoes in the bin and head lettuce. It wasn’t what I had in mind, but it would work. Since the largest potatoes were about 3” long, we got four spuds and a carrot to spice up the lettuce a little. It didn’t take long at Mel’s. We checked out the nightscopes in his basement where there was a tiny sliver of light and it was like green daylight. Bill forked over gold and I dug out the gold I’d picked up when we went by the house to take the steaks out. We had one of those plate things that you put meat on to make it thaw faster and I’d taken time to get the steaks started thawing.

After dinner and a bathroom break, we returned to Bill’s and began to move the contents of the two trailers to the basement and stack them with the things we’d taken from my pickup. It was close to midnight by the time we finished up and with the curfew, I was spending the night with Bill. Their guest bedroom had a queen sized bed. We both showered and shaved before turning in. I was happy to get out of those clothes that I’d worn for ten or was it eleven straight days. They’d have to be soaked before being washed.

We got up around 8am, dressed and reattached the trailers to my pickup. We actually found a Perkins open in Apache Junction and had a good breakfast. Four hours later, we pulled into the camp. Our wives came running and I thought Helen would crush me before she let go. Then, she lit into me like, well... I have nothing to compare it to. Susan gave Bill a crushing hug that wasn’t accompanied by the tongue lashing I had to endure. I knew better than to say anything before she ran out of steam.

“We got nearly everything we were looking for and what we didn’t, we bought when we got back to Mesa.”

“You’ve been home?”

“We had to unload the trailers and pickup into Bill and Susan’s basement. When we get back, we’ll move it to their shelter. If we get loaded quickly enough, you can sleep in our bed tonight.”

Ninety minutes later we were headed downhill. We left the large pile of firewood covered with a tarp. Since we had the permit and had a lot of firewood, we agreed to come back the next day and haul all we could. The pickup with sideboards held 108 cubic feet, the trailer another 396 cubic feet and the sideboards for the trailer, 144 cubic feet. One vehicle would hold 648 cubic feet which was about five cords of firewood. We decided to leave the trailer sideboards home because our best estimate was about 6 cords of firewood. The two trailers and pickup beds with sideboards would hold almost 8 cords tightly packed.